

# 19

NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

VOLUME 33  
NUMBER 2



Magazine of the Victorian Society in America

# 19

NINETEENTH  
CENTURY

VOLUME 33 • NUMBER 2  
*Fall 2013*

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A basket of shell work flowers in dome, c. 1868. Private collection. Photo courtesy Alan Kolc Photography.

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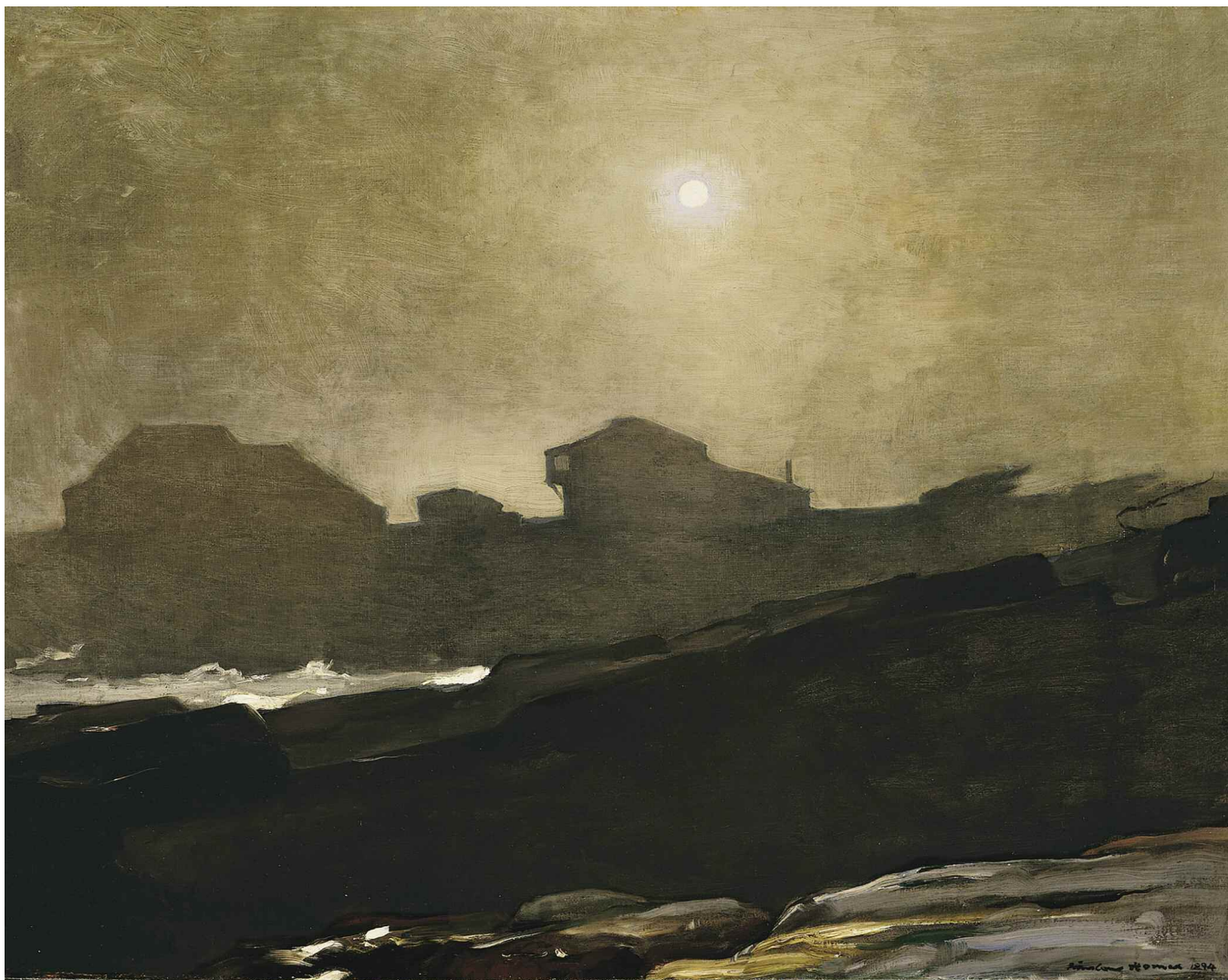
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Winslow Homer, *Artist's Studio in an Afternoon Fog*, 1894. Courtesy Memorial Art Gallery, University of Rochester, R. T. Miller Fund, 41-32.

# Winslow Homer's Studio Preserved

JAMES F. O'GORMAN

For the last twenty-six years of his life Winslow Homer called home a small wooden structure standing on the granitic, wave-washed shore of Prouts Neck, a peninsula jutting out into the Atlantic twelve miles south of Portland, Maine. The place is historically important because Homer ranks among this country's most celebrated painters, many of whose unforgettable works were painted at this site. The building descended through collateral members of his family who made significant changes over the years. Much as it had during Homer's occupancy, the Studio throughout the twentieth century drew numbers of those interested in seeing the place where the artist created his iconic and influential seascapes, or "marines," as he called them. Long a worry for preservationists, the future of the site is now assured. In recognition of its importance it received National Historic Landmark status in 1965, and the Portland Museum of Art recently bought the property with the aim of preserving it for posterity, promoting new scholarship about Homer's life and work, and educating the visiting public. The Studio reopened for tours in 2012 carefully restored to its condition at Homer's death in 1910. It received a Victorian Society preservation award this year.

In the 1870s large numbers of outsiders began summering in Maine. In the early 1880s members of the Homer family began to acquire land on Prouts Neck. They established seasonal residences—and christened their own first-built house there "The Ark"—then embarked on the real estate development that helped transform the Neck from a traditional fishing and farming area into a thriving community of summer cottagers. In 1884, after over twenty years in New York and in the middle of a successful career, Winslow Homer moved his address permanently to Maine. Although he travelled extensively thereafter from Canada to the Caribbean, Prouts Neck became his primary residence until his death.

For his new home and studio Homer had an existing carriage shed behind The Ark moved to one of his nearby lots and had it converted by John Calvin Stevens, then the junior partner in the Portland firm of Fassett & Stevens and at the beginning of a long career that was to see him

become Maine's most famous architect. Homer later described the pair as "brother artists" and gave the architect his extraordinary painting of the *Artist's Studio in an Afternoon Fog* (1894; Rochester Memorial Art Gallery) as payment for architectural services on a rental house the artist had erected on the Neck. As testament of that friendship the image of the painting appears in the



Southeast corner of the piazza. It is said that Homer spent hours studying the coastal seascapes from this lofty perch. Copyright trentbell photography. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine.





Studio from the southeast. The studio looks toward the coast. Copyright trentbell photography. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine

background of Claude Montgomery's 1934 portrait of Stevens now at the Portland Museum of Art.

The Bowdoin College Museum of Art owns Stevens's original drawings for converting the shed into living quarters. The plan shows the roughly 660-square foot first floor divided into a living room with fireplace and inglenook plus an entry between two smaller rooms. A stairway adjacent to the fireplace winds up to the second floor. The elevations show—among other improvements—the projection off the second floor of a “piazza,” as Homer called it, a balcony jutting toward the sea and resting on diagonal braces. The brick chimney stack was to have minimal ornamental detailing such as four belt courses, a flared top, and a decorative pattern of single projecting bricks.

As erected, clapboards enclosed the walls of the wood-frame structure and shingles covered the mansard roof. The second floor was left as one lofty space below a pair of exposed trusses. Sparse interior and exterior details position the architecture as transitional between the waning Queen Anne and the coming Shingle Style. On the interior these

**Homer largely painted out-of-doors, and at home he famously guarded his privacy, as have serious artists since who have worked in heavily touristed Maine places.**

include the brick fireplace with crane, fretted fireplace frame, and inglenook bench carved with curlicues of a kind Homer often used in his handwriting during these years. On the exterior they include the ornamental brickwork of the chimney and the chamfered braces of the piazza.

A second phase of construction occurred about 1890. The artist added the roughly 450-square-foot “painting room” on the north side of the building; that is, the side away from the rocks and water. Only a corner window looks obliquely southeastward toward the coast. Nowhere in the building, originally or as extended (except a small one high up in the mansard), are there the north-facing windows that we would expect in an artist's studio. Traditional New England houses back up against the north winds, but Homer surely had something else in mind. He largely painted out-of-doors, and at home he

famously guarded his privacy, as have serious artists since who have worked in heavily touristed Maine places. He saw to it that the interior of his Studio was sheltered from the gaze of passersby on the Neck's main drive (now called Winslow Homer Road). In this same building campaign



Main room with fireplace. The heart of Homer's living quarters. Copyright trentbell photography. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine.

Homer added a small “mud room” around the main entrance and an addition that might have contained a bath and/or kitchen at the corner of the south facing elevation. It apparently replaced the original privy off the landing of the stair. At some point he “signed” his Studio as if it were one of his paintings by scratching his name into the glass of a side window. He also scribbled notes, mementos, and quotations on the inner walls. One reads: “Oh what a friend chance can be when it chooses.” It is a quote from a French “sensational” novel by Émile Gaboriau entitled *La Clique dorée*, a copy of which, in English translation, remains in the Studio.

It was common for artists of the time to leave the cities for rustic “summer haunts,” as one contemporary publication called them. At the end of his life William Morris Hunt briefly occupied such a seasonal structure at Magnolia on Cape Ann, Massachusetts. Called “The Hulk” because it reminded some of a nautical wreck, it was in fact a converted barn with a view from on high of the harbor designed by William Ralph Emerson, an architect whose work in general was a source of inspiration for the young John Calvin Stevens. Homer could have known The Hulk when he summered in nearby Gloucester harbor in 1880. But unlike the summer studios of his contemporaries, where artists including Hunt often

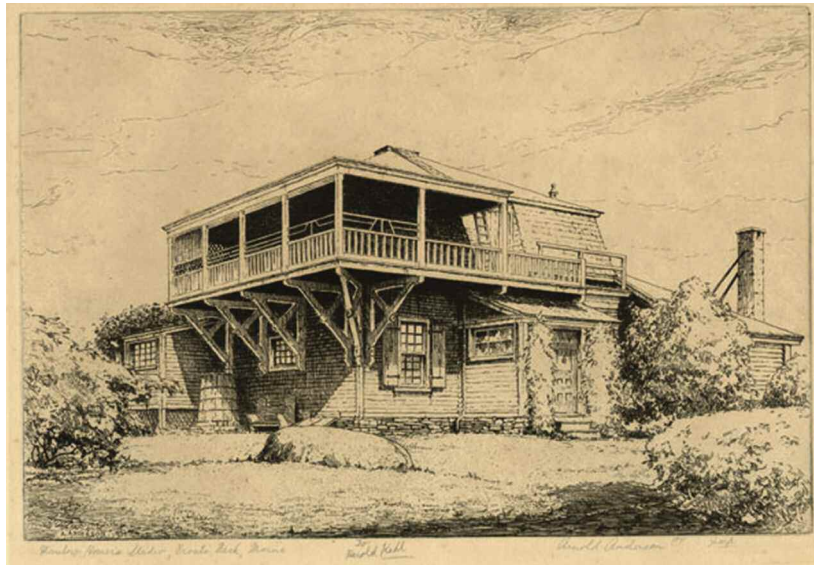
taught students or entertained friends and family, and which closed with the coming of autumn weather, Homer stayed solo at Prouts Neck deep into the winter. What little we know about his life in his awkwardly assembled abode suggests that it was spartan. It seems to have followed the ideal of simplicity espoused by Thoreau before him and championed by many of the Arts-and-Crafters who followed.

From his letters, mainly to members of his family, which remain scarce and frustratingly vague, we learn that he apparently lived, cooked, and ate in the main room, and he must have used one of the smaller rooms for sleeping (the other eventually became a corridor into the painting room). Furnishings must have been sparse and few survive. There was originally no kitchen as such. Family tradition has it that he cooked in the fireplace using the crane and pots. We know that he also heated the place with stoves. In a letter to his father of 1886 he said he made a mistake by not getting a larger one because water froze beyond ten feet of what he had. In a later letter, written to his brother Charles in January 1907, he complained that everything was frozen outside his sleeping room. We assume that before he added the painting room on the north, he worked in the large second story room when he stayed indoors touching up canvases



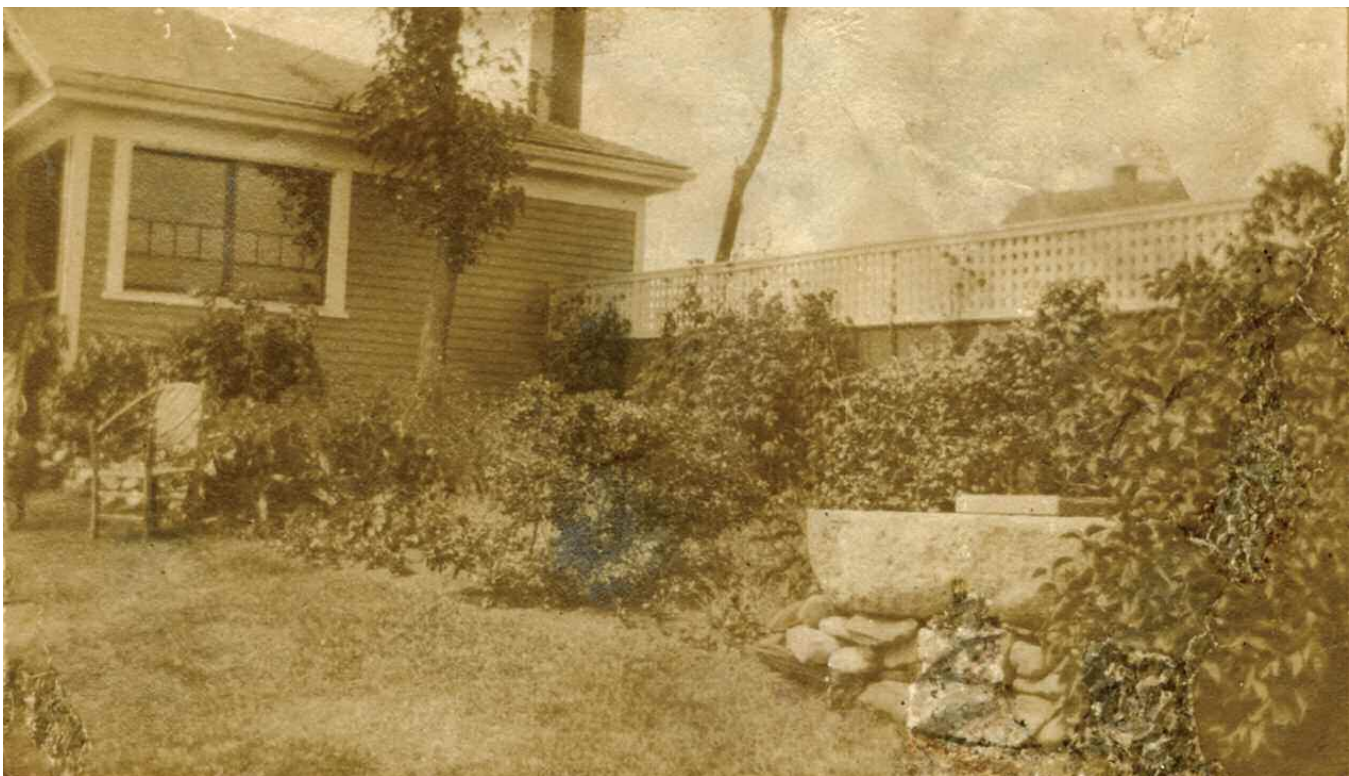
painted outdoors. There is no known document to prove it, however, and he did occasionally accommodate his brother Charles up there overnight on a cot. In later years the space seems to have been used largely for storage.

Indoor comfort mattered little because Homer was in thrall to the out-of-doors. He spent vast amounts of time not painting but observing the quick-changing drama of nature along the coast. As he wrote in an oft-quoted remark, again to his brother Charles in 1895, Prouts Neck was a place where “the Sun will not rise, or set, without my notice.” According to family tradition, Homer would sit or pace on the piazza for hours undisturbed, staring at the rocks, waves, and atmospheric effects of sunlight on seawater. There was also a small platform precariously roosted at the apex of the mansard where he could have perched like a seagull to increase his angle of vision. This remains something of an enigma for, although it shows in vintage photographs, there is no known description of his using it. (He also painted from a small remote shack at water’s edge away from the Studio.) Inspired by the land- and seascape around the Studio, the artist created powerful icons of waves crashing against the weather-beaten shore that



Arnold Anderson (b.1895) *Winslow Homer's Studio, Prouts Neck, Maine, 1931*. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine.

evoke the various moods and colors of raw nature. The site changed him. He now addressed universal themes in marked contrast to the reportage of his earlier, land-locked work. Widely ranked at the top of the nation's artistic patrimony, these late seascapes, where nature becomes art, transformed the practice of marine painting



Homer's painting room, garden, and surrounding fence, c. 1910. The fence formed an outer bastion against the summer cottagers. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine.



Winslow Homer, *Weatherbeaten*, 1894. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine. Bequest of Charles Shipman Payson. Photo by Melville D. McLean.

in the United States, and helped to establish a fixed idea of the rugged New England coast in the national imagination.

The Homer family altered the Studio over the years. In addition to many cosmetic details they inserted three bedrooms and a bathroom into the originally open second floor, rebuilt and enlarged the kitchen eventually added by Homer himself, propped up the weakened diagonal brackets of the piazza with supplementary posts and braces, and added a columnar pergola leading from the road to the new kitchen. Many of these additions were erected in 1939-40 from the design of A. Osborne Willauer, a Boston architect and member of the family. When the Portland Museum of Art acquired the property it hired a team of experts to prepare a Historic Structure Report and then decided that there existed enough evidence to return the Studio to the state Homer knew at the end of his life. The building itself, Willauer's drawings, archival photographs taken during the artist's lifetime, a few of Homer's letters and sketches, and his atmospheric painting of the Studio in fog made this possible. Intrusive later additions such as the pergola vanished and the second floor returned to its original openness. The later kitchen was removed, a bathroom provided in a rebuilt space that conformed in size to the one erected about

1890, and a new kitchen inserted into one of the original small rooms. With the exception of bath and kitchen, most of the new work is not noticeable to the average visitor. New material matches old through the skill of restoration specialists. The original finish of the Queen Anne fireplace frame and ingle bench as well as the bead-board walls was carefully matched. The exterior colors are the result of intensive paint analysis.

In addition to returning it to an agreed-upon earlier state, the restoration project directed by Mills Whitaker Architects reflected the changed function of the Studio from reclusive artist's home to museum exhibition and visitable historic site. It needed to be brought up to code for public occupancy. This meant, for example, the installation of modern HVAC, new electrical service, fire prevention measures, security surveillance system, plumbing, and so forth, as well as hidden steel reinforcement for the projecting piazza and removal of the later supplementary supports. Although Homer wrote to his sister-in-law in 1884, when the piazza was new, that he thought it could safely hold "a complete Sunday school picnic," with the later posts removed the original diagonal supports alone proved inadequate for public visitation.

What is left after all the work is not the building Homer



knew but as close to it as modern scholarship and modern restoration technology could make it. All it lacks is the inhabitant. The work Homer produced there speaks for itself and has been thoroughly absorbed into the history of American art. Attempts to define the personality of the man have also preoccupied many scholars using various methods. The old simplistic image of a Prouts Neck hermit has been dispelled. Homer's attitude toward others on Prout's Neck seems to have been essentially dual; one side was that of a warm family man and intimate friend of the locals, the other that of an ogre. The architecture of the Studio best reflects the ogre. There is preserved a crudely lettered sign reading "SNAKES! SNAKES! MICE! that, it is said, he used to scare off intruders when he worked outdoors. If you had the temerity to approach the front door while Homer was working and you were one of the estivators or a passing tourist (all-weather members of the local community knew better), and if you were paying attention, you would have noticed a small round bronze door knocker centered on the weathered boards. A knocker to request entry, yes, but if you looked more closely, and if you knew your Greek mythology, you might hesitate to summon the inhabitant, for in high relief it depicted the head of Medusa, she who turned gazers into



(Top): Studio from the southeast. The studio looks toward the coast. Copyright trentbell photography. Courtesy Portland Museum of Art, Maine

stone. The subtle warning to unwanted interlopers represented the one small touch of high Western culture that Homer allowed himself in the layout his rustic retreat. As we noted above the entire Studio was designed to turn its back on the public, on the gawkers who came to the Neck for a day, a week, a month, or all summer. Out of his redoubt and not working he might relax a bit even when he encountered idle vacationers. The duality of his disposition is neatly captured in the diary of one of the cottagers who wrote about a group of them meeting Homer on the road. Amid the ensuing "panic," one "faced the distant foe" while another "had a friendly and facetious chat" with the artist.

What has not yet been restored to its essential place—but we hope will soon be—is a high board fence surrounding Homer's vegetable and flower garden on the north side of the studio, a further bulwark toward the road certainly intended as defense against the craning crowds. It did not always prove to be effective. There is an article published in 1893 that proves that the fence could be breached and emphasizes what the artist was up against in trying to preserve his privacy. By her own account an insistent art student accompanied by her father once attempted to visit Homer. They rowed over to the Neck from the mainland to meet "a famous marine painter" who had the reputation among the summer people of being "an old grouch who locked himself up with a barrel of rum and painted all summer" although he held the respect of the locals. Once they found the Studio they encountered "a most unprepossessing back fence with no available entrance." Not to be thwarted, they "crawled through an opening . . . and walked through a potato patch, a liberty that might have offended the artistic eye of the owner, had he seen it." After deciding not to climb through a window, they found the front door and Homer's wirehaired terrier, Sam, whose barking aroused the artist.



Winslow Homer at Prout's Neck, 1900.

He appeared “fairly bristling with wrath at being disturbed. His eyes flashed with anger, his hair stood on end . . . while his shoulders were raised to their greatest height, giving him the appearance of a cat with his back up.” Having been emphatically informed that the Studio was private and he had nothing to show them, they quickly retreated via the rocks along the shore rather than back through the garden. With Sam to guard door, perhaps the Medusa should have been nailed to the outside of the fence.

The preservation of Winslow Homer’s Studio and its opening to the public is timely now because of recent studies of the spaces where artists lived and worked undertaken by such scholars as Stephen May and especially Wanda Corn. They stress that these venues vivify the lost presence of their inhabitants and, more importantly, teach us a great deal about the impact of place and the sources of inspiration that underlie creativity. Standing on the restored piazza of the Studio the visitor can compare the real marine environment with mental images of Homer’s local paintings and begin to understand the relationship between the natural scene and its transformation into art. Thus Winslow Homer’s restored Studio, the site of his greatest achievements, proves to be important educational environment.



A Note on Sources: General publications on the art and life of Winslow Homer are numerous. I have drawn on many of them but especially the first, William Howe Downs, *The Life and Works of Winslow Homer*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1911, as well as the following works specific to his Prout’s Neck Studio: Philip Beam, *Winslow Homer at Prouts Neck*, Boston: Little, Brown, 1966; Patricia Junker, ed., *Winslow Homer in the 1890s: Prouts Neck Observed*, New York: Hudson Hills Press, 1990; Barbá + Wheelock, Architects, “Winslow Homer Studio: Historic Structure Report,” Portland, Maine, 2005; and Thomas A. Denenberg, ed., *Weatherbreaten: Winslow Homer and Maine*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012. The present article is reworked from my essay in the last publication. My thanks to the staff of the Portland Museum of Art, university of Kent to the 2012 A. W. N. Pugin Bicentennial Conference: New Directions in Gothic Revival Studies Worldwide.

## The Victorian Society in America is going green!

And we hope you will assist us in this effort. In an attempt to do our part to reduce the consumption of trees and thus our use of paper we have combined our e-newsletter and our “hard copy” newsletter, *The Victorian*. The result is ***The Victorian Quarterly***, which is sent out via e-mail to all of our members who provide us with their e-mail addresses. A print version of the same will be sent via regular U.S. mail only to those who do not have e-mail. This will allow all of our members to receive the same news information from and about the Society.

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World's Columbian Exposition, Chicago, Illinois, 1893. View of the Court of Honor, looking west.

# C. A. Neff

## THE EDUCATION OF A BEAUX-ARTS ARCHITECT

ROBERT WOJTOWICZ

Clarence Amos Neff (1873-1952) was one of the most versatile and prolific architects working in Virginia during the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup> Educated according to the Beaux-Arts ideology that prevailed at the time, Neff successfully applied it to a wide range of building types, including residences, schools, theaters, hotels, stores, and commercial skyscrapers. Especially the downtown skyline and residential neighborhoods of Norfolk were greatly changed and improved during the course of a career that spanned more than five decades. As was typical of architects who practiced during this era, Neff explored a variety of architectural styles and idioms, but his longevity required that he adapt readily and adeptly to new trends in both the United States and Europe. He did not articulate a specific theory of architecture, but an analysis of his output reveals how one architect at work in a small city confronted the evolution of modernism in America. Neff was especially well prepared for this challenge by an unusually rich and varied architectural education that began in a professional office, continued on an academic campus, and culminated in a Beaux-Arts atelier. While by no means typical, his experience illustrates the breadth of pedagogical opportunities available to students in the waning years of the nineteenth century.

Neff was educated during a period of tumultuous change in American architecture.<sup>2</sup> Against the background of explosive metropolitan growth, architects responded to new practical and professional challenges, as well as imported cultural influences, by utilizing a highly eclectic architectural language. This manifested itself in a succession of Romantic revival styles, ranging from the French-inspired Second Empire and Neo-Grec to the British-influenced Victorian Gothic and Queen Anne, all of which were well documented in the era's professional journals. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the wave of neoclassicism that had first captured the imagination of architects and laymen alike at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago swelled rapidly, inundating the last vestiges of eclecticism while

simultaneously buoying the Colonial Revival and Arts and Crafts styles in its wake. Architect and historian Joy Wheeler Dow labeled this shift in taste the "American Renaissance" in his eponymous 1904 study of the nation's domestic architecture.<sup>3</sup> Many of the American Renaissance's leaders worked in the urban strongholds of the northeastern United States, and within this group, most had studied at the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts in Paris, the most renowned institution of its kind in the world and the arbiter of a refined, modern neoclassicism. Nationwide, they exerted considerable influence over evolving standards of both higher education and professional practice. Long viewed in opposition to an emergent native modernism, the American Renaissance instead should be recognized as one of several contributing forces to its birth and development.

The facts of Neff's early life are frustratingly few and unremarkable. He was born on May 28, 1873 in the town of Delaware, Ohio, north of Columbus.<sup>4</sup> His parents were Edward E. Neff, one of Delaware's leading entrepreneurs, and Mary Glover Neff, the sister of one of Edward Neff's former business partners.<sup>5</sup> Nothing is known of his primary education, but he attended Delaware High School and graduated most likely in spring 1891.<sup>6</sup> In what seemed to have been an early bid for independence from his family, Neff joined the Ohio National Guard's Fourteenth Regiment of Infantry around the time of his eighteenth birthday. He enlisted in the Regiment's Company K, which was based in Delaware and known as the Joy Guards in honor of its first captain, Frederick M. Joy.<sup>7</sup> With

the nation at peace, the Joy Guards saw only limited active service, apart from their regularly scheduled drills and encampments. While performing his Guard service, Neff continued his education at his hometown college, Ohio Wesleyan University, following the leads his brother and sister. He took classes in both the classical and the scientific studies programs, but both he and his sister withdrew from the university in 1893 before completing



Clarence A. Neff, c. 1900.  
Collection of the Neff family.



their baccalaureate degrees, perhaps on account of the economic depression, popularly known as the Panic of 1893.<sup>8</sup>

It was around this time that Neff found his vocation as an architect, despite his father's purported disapproval.<sup>11</sup> This was evidently a stance not uncommon among men who had gentlemanly aspirations for their sons.<sup>9</sup> Neff's interest in architecture was most likely linked to his exposure to the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, widely recognized as a signal event in American cultural history.<sup>10</sup> Building on the extraordinary success of Paris's 1889 Exposition Universelle, the organizers of the Columbian Exposition sought to create an even grander vision of American technological prowess, cultural maturation, and civic splendor. As such, the fair became the de facto showcase of the American Renaissance. It received widespread publicity in the nation's newspapers and magazines. As historian Neil Harris noted, "The fair's obvious importance forced almost anyone who fancied himself or herself an observer of contemporary mores to visit Chicago for a closer look."<sup>11</sup> In fact, more than twenty-one million visitors would attend the fair before its gates closed permanently on October 31, 1893.<sup>12</sup> That Neff was one of those who felt compelled to visit the Columbian Exposition for "a closer look" is almost certain, since his National Guard unit made two compulsory trips to the fairgrounds, one in October 1892 while they were still under construction, and again in September 1893.<sup>13</sup>

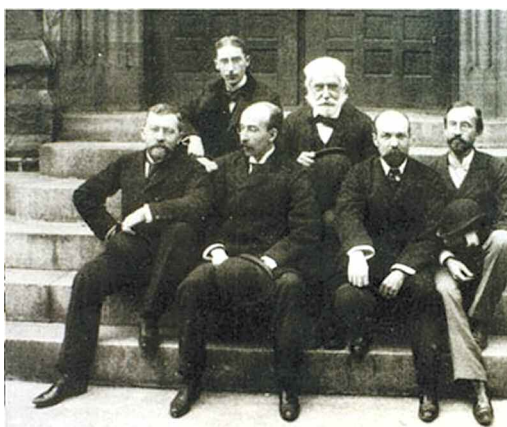
Although the Exposition proffered numerous attractions, its most spectacular feature was its architecture. This would have been immediately evident to Neff, even if he had encountered only illustrations of the buildings in the pages of a newspaper or magazine. Prior to the Exposition, the American Renaissance had been adumbrated in the design of individual buildings; by summer 1893, an entire "White City" had been constructed on the shoreline of Lake Michigan. Early in the planning process, the fair's architectural team had determined that a neoclassical style, symbolic of national unity in the wake of the Civil War, should define the main exhibition halls surrounding the ceremonial Court of Honor. The architectural team, although led by Daniel Burnham of Chicago, was comprised primarily of East Coast firms, and each was assigned a specific building. Richard Morris Hunt (1827-1895) of New York, the oldest and most respected architect in the group, was given the Administration Building at the head of the Court; McKim, Mead & White of New York the Agriculture Building; George B. Post (1837-1913) of New York the Manufactures and Liberal Arts Building; Peabody and Stearns of Boston the Machinery Hall; and Van Brunt and

Howe of Boston and Kansas City the Electricity Building.<sup>14</sup> The resulting harmony and brilliance of the White City dazzled a visiting public largely accustomed to the dingy squalor of most American cities of the period.

The aesthetic triumph of the Court of Honor signaled a new direction for American architecture, one that underscored the growing influence of the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris and the role of classicism generally in architectural education and practice during this period. Directly and indirectly, many members of the Exposition's architectural team had been affected by the rigorous curriculum of the École, where the study of the classicism, in all of its historical manifestations, was greatly emphasized. In 1846, Hunt, commonly known as "the dean of American architects," had been the first American to attend the École. After returning stateside in 1855, he had designed and built the well-known Studio Building on West Tenth Street in New York's Greenwich Village, where he had conducted private architectural lessons in the manner of a *patron* – or instructor – overseeing one of the École's ateliers. Hunt's students at the Studio Building had included his future Exposition colleagues Post and Henry Van Brunt (1832-1903), among others.<sup>15</sup> Following Hunt's lead, Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909) of McKim, Mead & White and Robert Swain Peabody (1845-1917) of Peabody and Stearns had both attended the École in the 1860s, studying together in the same atelier.<sup>16</sup> Yet, even with this shared background, the team's aesthetic unanimity was still a remarkable achievement. To varying degrees, its members had each dabbled in such eclectic modes as the Victorian Gothic and the Richardsonian Romanesque during the years leading up to the Exposition, and perhaps even they did not realize the future ramifications of the American Renaissance.

Around the time of the Exposition, Neff took the next most logical step toward his future profession by working as a "student draftsman" in the newly founded Columbus architectural firm of Yost and Packard.<sup>17</sup> Both of the firm's principals had strong ties to Delaware, Ohio, and these undoubtedly facilitated Neff's employment there. Frank L. Packard (1866-1923) was a native of Delaware and fellow alumnus of Delaware High School; he had continued his studies at Ohio State University and at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, from which he graduated in June 1887. Moving to

New York City, Packard had worked for the firm of Babb, Cook & Willard before returning to Ohio to start his own practice in Columbus in 1888.<sup>18</sup> Joseph Warren Yost (1847-1923), who was not formally trained in architecture, had opened an office in Columbus in 1883.<sup>19</sup>



The Columbia architecture faculty in 1894 (L to R): Maximilian K. Kress, Charles P. Warren, Frank Dempster Sherman, William R. Ware, Grenville Temple Snelling, and Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin. Courtesy University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York.

During a partnership that lasted from 1892 to 1899, Yost and Packard designed a wide range of buildings in a variety of eclectic styles, including the Queen Anne, the Richardsonian Romanesque, and the Renaissance Revival.<sup>27</sup> The firm quickly emerged as a pacesetter in the state capital during what historian Jane Ware deemed “Columbus architecture’s finest hour.”<sup>21</sup>

Neff stayed with the firm for two years, most likely 1893 and 1894.<sup>22</sup> A surviving document links him to the firm’s project for the Chittenden Hotel (1895; demolished 1973), an imposing Spanish Renaissance-Revival landmark, replete with belvederes, balconies and open loggias, that was located on a major corner site in downtown Columbus.<sup>23</sup> The specific details of his employment with Yost and Packard are unknown, but he was likely assigned to minor drawing tasks and general office chores. As historian Mary N. Woods noted, the quality of instruction in architects’ offices during the latter part of the nineteenth century varied greatly, ultimately providing a rationale for more rigorous educational standards and practices. “It was a system that served the interests of both architect and student,” Wood wrote. “The former got cheap labor and occasionally pupilage fees; the latter received firsthand experience and often wages while he learned.”<sup>24</sup> Evidently, the experience Neff gained with the firm convinced him of the need for additional academic training, even though such training – let alone a degree – was not yet a professional requirement in the field of architecture. In the first half of the 1890s, there was only a handful of academic programs from which he could choose: the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia College (later Columbia University), the University of Illinois, Cornell University, Syracuse University, and the University of Pennsylvania.<sup>25</sup> None of these was located nearby, but with his discharge from the Ohio National Guard on March 28, 1894, Neff was free to leave the state in further pursuit of his education.<sup>26</sup>

In fall 1894, Neff enrolled at Columbia College in New York City as a postgraduate, non-matriculated “special” student, studying architectural history and theory.<sup>27</sup> Founded by William R. Ware (1832-1915), Columbia’s architecture program was the nation’s second oldest and liberally based on that of the *École des Beaux-Arts*.<sup>28</sup> Ware was a pioneering figure in American architectural education. A graduate of Harvard University, he had first encountered the *École*’s methods in 1859 while studying at Richard Morris Hunt’s Greenwich Village atelier, where he had also met George B. Post and Henry Van Brunt. With Van Brunt, Ware had subsequently formed a partnership in Boston, where they had opened an atelier for the training of young architects in imitation of Hunt.<sup>29</sup> In 1865, Ware had been invited to develop the Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s architecture program, the nation’s first, which he had also modeled after the *École*’s, but with additional grounding in the liberal arts. Before launching the program, Ware had traveled abroad between 1866 and 1867, studying historical monuments and visiting various institutions, including the *École* and its affiliated ateliers. The

Institute’s program had opened in fall 1868, and it quickly had begun to attract talented students.<sup>30</sup> Yet, despite its success, Ware had resigned his academic position and dissolved his partnership with Van Brunt in 1881 when Columbia College recruited him to lead its newly founded program.<sup>31</sup> Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin, an architect and an historian who had studied at the *École*, had joined Ware as the program’s second faculty member in fall 1882, and by the time Neff enrolled in fall 1894, there were a half dozen instructors on the faculty.<sup>32</sup>

Insofar as the term “Beaux-Arts” signifies an instructional method above and beyond its association with the classicism, Ware’s position on how far the French school’s model should be adapted for American educational purposes needs to be examined further. Following a general immersion in the liberal arts during the first year of study, Columbia students were exposed to architectural history and design.<sup>33</sup> General Beaux-Arts principles were advanced at this stage, including the primacy of axial planning and symmetry in building design; the creation of elaborate ink, wash and watercolor drawings to convey information; and the study of ancient and Renaissance classicism – and occasionally medievalism – for modern solutions. Though more flexible on this last point than many of his professional colleagues, Ware nevertheless believed in the preeminence of classicism among the various styles of architecture.<sup>34</sup> Yet, having been exposed to the *École*’s curriculum second-hand, Ware was no defender of its absolute virtues, and the program he led in the 1880s and 1890s at Columbia was even less dependent on the *École* than the program he had developed earlier at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He disavowed competitions and prizes, a mainstay of the official and private ateliers connected to the *École*, and, furthermore, he favored the development of students’ overall design skills above expert facility in drafting.<sup>35</sup>

The admission of non-matriculated “special” students, such as Neff, who were essentially experienced draftsmen and who sometimes could claim college backgrounds, was perhaps the most controversial aspect of many of the nation’s pioneering architecture programs, including Columbia College’s. Such students would generally bypass the more general coursework and move directly into the more specialized design curriculum, but while they helped to raise enrollments, especially at urban institutions, critics claimed they lowered academic standards.<sup>36</sup> To detractors inside the College, Ware vigorously defended the special-students program, which he had initiated in 1890, based on its many successful participants.<sup>37</sup> He wrote:

During this period, besides eight or nine college men, about ten times as many practicing draughtsmen have presented themselves, nearly half of whom have been attracted from distant parts of the country, in the west and south. A fair proportion have proved to be men of maturity and character, sufficiently practised in drawing and design to take up our current work, and most of them have possessed sufficient general education to follow with profit the instruction in history and



ornament, if not that in mechanics and engineering. Three or four have found time to review their earlier studies and presently to swing into line as regular students, finally taking their degree in due course. Other have remained a longer or shorter time, according as their means held out, some staying in the school only while business was slack, and returning to office work as soon as opportunity offered.<sup>38</sup>

Prominent alumni of the “special” initiative included I. N. Phelps Stokes (1867-1944), Grosvenor Atterbury (1869-1956), and William A. Delano (1874-1960).<sup>39</sup>

Outside the College, the most forceful critic of Ware’s program was the redoubtable Charles Follen McKim of McKim, Mead & White, then the leading architecture firm in New York. McKim was the program’s most powerful professional advisor and financial benefactor, and he clashed repeatedly with Ware over the curriculum itself and the quality of students emerging from it. At the core of their disagreement lay their very different ideological approaches to classicism, with McKim favoring a stricter emulation of ancient and Renaissance models and the Beaux-Arts educational model generally.<sup>40</sup> On a more practical level, McKim’s various projects and initiatives at Columbia must have both irritated and threatened Ware. These included McKim’s creation in 1889 of the McKim Scholarship in architecture for postgraduate student travel, his firm’s design in 1893 of an entirely new campus for Columbia College in upper Manhattan, and his establishment in 1895 of the American Academy in Rome for postgraduate architectural study.<sup>41</sup>

Although not directly related to the situation at Columbia, McKim’s prominent role in the design of the World’s Columbian Exposition must also have irked Ware, who, unlike his former partner Van Brunt, had not been invited to join the architectural team. As historian Richard Plunz dryly noted, “Throughout the 1890s this maneuvering meant that the architecture program at Columbia was scarcely a neutral turf.”<sup>42</sup>

Neff and his fellow students were probably only dimly aware of such internecine conflicts within the Columbia College hierarchy. In fall 1894, Neff enrolled in two courses (Elements of Architecture: Theory and Practice; and Architectural History: Ancient Ornament), dropping to one course in spring 1895 (Architectural History: Theory).<sup>43</sup> Given the small size of the faculty, his

professors most likely included Ware and Hamlin.<sup>44</sup> Practical building programs – a gallery, a school, a mausoleum, a library – were assigned to the students as a way of developing their compositional skills. Two early drawings by Neff conform to this type of program, and

they likely date from his Columbia tenure. The first is a longitudinal section of a picture gallery; the second is a combined front elevation, longitudinal section, and ground plan of a sculpture gallery or war memorial. Both reveal his assured handling of the various classical orders, of general building composition, and of pen, ink, and wash rendering.<sup>45</sup>

At the time of Neff’s enrollment, Columbia College’s campus was located in midtown Manhattan in the vicinity of St. Patrick’s Cathedral. The program was administered by the School of Mines and housed on the fourth

floor of its building on the corner of 50th Street and Fourth Avenue, now Park Avenue.<sup>46</sup> The proximity of the main architecture drafting room to Fourth Avenue, which then straddled the smoke-belching railroad line leading to the old Grand Central Terminal, prompted the architecture students to nickname the facility the “Maison de Punk.”<sup>47</sup> Along with his fellow classmates, Neff commuted to campus. He resided downtown in a tenement at 244 Spring Street, and he either walked to campus or, more likely, traveled there via elevated train or streetcar.<sup>48</sup> He was undoubtedly stimulated by the new buildings and construction projects he encountered on his regular journey, but also by those farther afield. Columbia College was

about to relocate uptown to McKim’s new campus on Morningside Heights, which the architect had designed in a characteristically neoclassical mode. The construction site at 116<sup>th</sup> Street and Broadway must have functioned as a quasi-textbook in the American Renaissance for the College’s architecture students, embodying in brick-and-mortar form such theoretical Beaux-Arts principles as monumentality, axiality, and hierarchical planning. To the northwest of the new campus, construction was well underway on a monumental tomb for U.S. President Ulysses S. Grant (built 1885-1897); designed by John H. Duncan, it intentionally emulated the fabled mausolea of Greek and Roman antiquity. To the southeast of the new campus, foundations were being laid for the Cathedral of St. John the Divine (1889-1911), its eclectic design by Heins and LaFarge serving as a picturesque alternative to



C. C. Haight, School of Mines building. Columbia College, New York, New York, 1874. Note the presence of the New York Central locomotive in the Fourth Avenue railroad “cut” in the lower left of the photograph. Courtesy of University Archives, Columbia University in the City of New York.



Emmanuel-Louis Masqueray. Photograph by J. C. Strauss, St. Louis, 1909.

its neoclassical neighbors.

Moreover, across the rapidly expanding metropolitan area, other major projects under development in the first half of the 1890s undoubtedly would have captured Neff's and other students' attention, including Hunt's new Fifth Avenue wing for the Metropolitan Museum of Art and McKim, Mead & White's new building for the Brooklyn Institute of Arts and Sciences, the forerunner of the Brooklyn Museum of Art.<sup>49</sup> Thus the New York metropolitan area itself may be considered as much Neff's studio as the "Maison de Punk." Many years later, Neff would identify himself as Columbia's "class of 1895," although he never completed a degree.<sup>50</sup> A year after his departure, Columbia College was reorganized as Columbia University, and the Department of Architecture was granted the status of School under the Faculty of Applied Sciences.<sup>51</sup> The School of Architecture was moved to the new Morningside Heights campus in 1897, and the



Postcard view of 23rd street looking west from 3rd Avenue, 1905. Collection of the Museum of the City of New York. The Atelier Masqueray-Chambers was originally located on the north side of the block; it moved to the south side in 1897. The Metropolitan Building, where Hunt maintained his office, is the large building seen in the center right background.

non-matriculated "special" students were shifted to its Department of Extension Teaching in 1917.<sup>52</sup>

Neff's education did not end with his departure from Columbia College. While still a resident of New York City, he continued his training at a remarkable, experimental atelier run by the French architect Emmanuel-Louis Masqueray (1861-1917).<sup>53</sup> Like Ware, Masqueray was a formative figure in American architectural education; however, unlike Ware, Masqueray was a thoroughgoing product of the *École des Beaux-Arts*, and his pedagogical impact on Neff was perhaps even greater. Admitted to the *École* as a second-class student in 1879, Masqueray landed in the atelier of Charles-Jean Laisné, an admirer of Gothic architecture who was influenced by the architect and theorist Eugène-Emmanuel Viollet-le-Duc.<sup>54</sup> Paul René Léon Ginain, who embraced a rationalist approach to classicism known as Neo-Grec, assumed the atelier's leadership upon Laisné's retirement in 1880. Masqueray was thus exposed to two of the *École*'s most progressive instructors. He soon distinguished himself as a student by

winning the prestigious Prix Deschaumes (1880), the Prix Chaudesaigues (1881), and a gold medal at the Paris Salon (1883).<sup>55</sup> Masqueray likely earned his diploma in 1885.<sup>56</sup>

In 1887, Masqueray immigrated to the United States at the invitation of John M. Carrère (1858-1911), a classmate at the *École* and a partner with Thomas Hastings (1860-1929) in the New York firm of Carrère and Hastings. Masqueray was employed by the firm for five years and then switched to Richard Morris Hunt's office, perhaps in search of greater opportunity.<sup>57</sup> Historian Alan Lathrop speculated that "Masqueray probably functioned as an 'architect's artist' in the Hunt office as he had under Carrère and Hastings...."<sup>58</sup> Still, Masqueray was by no mean unappreciated by Hunt. According to an account written during Masqueray's lifetime: "Hunt took a great interest in his young French assistant; it is said that the surest way to disturb Hunt's temper and conduce a flow of excessive language was to intimate anything against Masqueray or his work."<sup>59</sup> The idea of opening a French-style atelier was said to have developed out of Masqueray's frustration in securing qualified draftsmen for employment in Hunt's office.<sup>60</sup>

With his employer's approbation, Masqueray joined with his colleague Walter B. Chambers in 1893 to open the "Atelier Masqueray-Chambers," the first architectural studio of its kind in the United States.<sup>61</sup> Chambers, who was also employed by Hunt and a fellow alumnus of the *École*, recalled that he and Masqueray became "the best of friends" from the moment of their first meeting, and the two *patrons'* compatibility seemed to have aided the venture's success.<sup>62</sup> Many years later, Chambers would recall that "Masqueray was the mainstay of the enterprise, giving up most of his evenings to the students who began to trickle in...."<sup>63</sup> Although both men had been trained at the *École*, they approached design problems rather differently. Masqueray, who had been firmly grounded in the *École*'s tenets, promoted the rationalist view among his students that buildings should be "representative of their time" irrespective of style.<sup>64</sup> In this regard, he may be counted among the handful of *École*-trained architects, including Ernest Flagg (1857-1947) and Hastings, who comprised the so-called "Modern French" school in the United States.<sup>65</sup> This school was engaged in the search for an American architecture that would be firmly rooted in Beaux-Arts principles but not slavishly imitative of the classical past.<sup>66</sup> In contrast to Masqueray, Chambers adhered only somewhat loosely to the *École*'s principles, tending toward a more picturesque approach to design based on medieval English and colonial American precedents.<sup>67</sup> Thus, within the Atelier, Chambers essentially served as an intellectual foil to Masqueray – and vice versa – and their students' education would have been vastly enriched as a result.

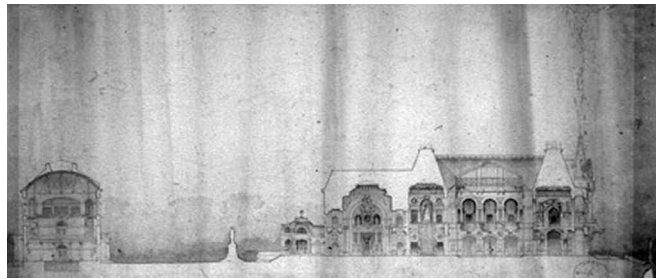
The Atelier occupied a loft at 123 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, close to Manhattan's fashionable Madison Square and to Hunt's relocated office in the Metropolitan Building, where both *patrons* continued to work during the day.<sup>68</sup> "Students of any degree of proficiency are received in the evening classes, and advanced students have the use of the Atelier



at all times,” a notice published in 1897 stated. “The system of instruction is exactly that of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.”<sup>69</sup> The following year, a pamphlet boasted that “Students [are] especially prepared for the Paris Ecole des Beaux Arts. Instruction is entirely individual and the advancement of each student depends on his own ability and application....”<sup>70</sup> Students were required to pay tuition by the month or by the term, in addition to an entrance fee, and to provide their own supplies.<sup>71</sup> One particularly innovative aspect was that women students were admitted.<sup>72</sup> The success of the Atelier soon led to overcrowding, however, and according to the *Builder*: “In 1894 or 1895 [Masqueray]...found it necessary to require of applicants a preliminary test or admission examination in architectural design, and the application of the ‘Orders’ to eliminate the least desirable aspirants and keep up the standard of work.”<sup>73</sup> Despite this prerequisite, substantial numbers of students continued to apply to the Atelier, necessitating its relocation in 1897 to larger quarters across the way at 126 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street.<sup>74</sup> More than eighty students trained at the Atelier in the first four years of its existence.<sup>75</sup>

The notable success of the Atelier Masqueray-Chambers, coupled with a general desire on the part of American alumni of the École to transplant its principles to home soil, led in January 1894 to the founding of the Beaux-Arts Society of Architects, which was known more commonly by its inverted moniker, the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects.<sup>76</sup> William A. Boring (1858-1937) was the first president, McKim the vice-president, Chambers the secretary, and Flagg the treasurer. At Flagg’s urging, the Society’s initial goal of establishing a genuine American counterpart to the École was soon redirected to forming a national network of ateliers.<sup>77</sup> As recounted in the *Builder*, the Society was thus able to foment “inter-atelier emulation and establish the French system of training by means of competitions.”<sup>78</sup> Ateliers were either conducted privately, as in the case of Masqueray-Chambers’s, or attached to established architecture firms, associations, or schools. Masqueray, it should be noted, served on the Society’s powerful Committee on Education, which organized the competitions.<sup>79</sup>

The Society’s first competition and exhibition, held at the New York Sketch Club in fall 1894, drew several contestants from the ateliers of Masqueray-Chambers, Flagg, Howard-Caldwell, and Carrère-Hastings as well from such institutions as the T-Square Club of Philadelphia, the Boston Architectural Club, and the Massachusetts Institute of Technology; Columbia College – where such competitions were downplayed somewhat by William R. Ware, although not outright discouraged – produced only one entrant. A second competition and exhibition were held again at the Sketch Club in spring 1895, drawing participants from the aforementioned ateliers in addition to Syracuse University and the University of Pennsylvania; this time, Columbia College was not represented.<sup>80</sup> In 1896, the Society’s newly elected president, Walter Cook, expressed a desire that “some coöperation with the architecture department of



Cross-section, “A Club-House for Undergraduates,” Old Dominion University Department of Art.

Columbia College might be brought about.”<sup>81</sup> The following year, Ware did, in fact, write positively of the roles of the various ateliers and the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects’ competitions in architectural education, but it was not until he retired in 1903 that Columbia adopted a stricter Beaux-Arts curriculum, subsequently establishing an on-campus atelier headed by Delano and two off-campus ateliers, led by McKim and Hastings, respectively.<sup>82</sup>

It is not known exactly when Neff began receiving instruction at the Atelier Masqueray-Chambers, but it is likely that he heard of its burgeoning reputation while a student at Columbia and that he applied there sometime in 1895, when the Atelier occupied its original location. The Atelier’s program was rigorous. Under the watchful and critical eye of the *patrons*, Neff and his fellow students would have completed numerous *esquisses* (sketches) related to the study of a particular *programme* (program or problem) that would have been explained in a detailed prospectus.<sup>83</sup> Subsequently, they would have revised their sketches into a *projet rendu* (finished project) that represented the *parti* (strategy or solution). Students worked within a limited time frame: twenty-four to forty-eight hours in the case of an internal *charette* or as long as several weeks for an external competition.

In fall 1895, the Society announced four competitions apiece for class A (advanced) students and for class B (beginning) students; Neff entered the second scheduled competition, whose deadline was April 1, 1896.<sup>84</sup> The Class A Programme, to which Neff made his submission, was titled “A club house for undergraduates,” while the Class B Programme was designated “The façade of a small theatre.”<sup>85</sup> As described in the prospectus, the clubhouse was intended to function as a student union for undergraduates at a university with population of 3,000 to 4,000 students and it would occupy an entire block of 300 by 500 feet in a “large university town.”<sup>86</sup> The facility was to include a large reception hall, two lecture halls, eight committee rooms, a library with reading room and librarian’s office, parlors, a café, a smoking room, a billiard room, a gymnasium with bathrooms, administrative offices, lavatories, janitor’s facilities, and a garden “with trees and attractive walks....”<sup>87</sup> The idea for the *programme* was undoubtedly prompted by the opening in January 1896 of the University of Pennsylvania’s Houston Club, later renamed Houston Hall, which is generally acknowledged to be the nation’s

first collegiate student union and which was itself the subject of an internal student competition.<sup>88</sup> In fact, McKim himself had served on the jury of the Houston Club competition in spring 1894.<sup>89</sup>

Two of four large competition drawings signed C.A. Neff and stamped “Atelier Masqueray” survive, and they depict a ground plan and cross section of a clubhouse and indoor swimming pool.<sup>90</sup> Neff’s second floor plan and main façade elevation, which were required as part of his submission, are lost.<sup>91</sup> As would be expected, the ground plan is axial and hierarchical in the Beaux-Arts manner. A curving driveway leads to a tripartite entrance loggia that opens into a central lobby flanked by amphitheater-style lecture halls. A double staircase divides the rear of the lobby from a grand reception hall replete with anterooms and circular garden pavilions. The axial sequence continues through the stepped terrace and the formal gardens, and it culminates in the separate gymnasium with swimming pool. An examination of the cross section reveals elaborate interiors in the French Neo-Baroque style, with the central lobby rising two stories under a glazed, iron-framed roof and the main reception room also rising two stories under a vaulted ceiling. Steeply pitched mansard roofs cover the clubhouse’s perimeter volumes, while an exposed bow-spring truss roof is indicated for the gymnasium. The swimming pool is located on the level below the gymnasium.

Similarities to Hunt’s architecture abound in Neff’s drawings: the Neo-Baroque ornamentation recalls the Louvre additions in Paris (1854-1855), the central court mimics the Breakers in Newport, Rhode Island (1893-1895), while the mansard roofs echo Biltmore, near Asheville, North Carolina (1894-1895). Such obeisance to Hunt should not be surprising given that he had died in July 1895 and that his life and work were the subjects of numerous tributes in the months that followed.<sup>92</sup> It is likely, too, that more than one of Neff’s fellow competitors similarly invoked the memory of Hunt. At the judging on April 17, Neff was awarded “First Mention” for his efforts by the jury, comprised of Carrère, Masqueray, John G. Howard, and Whitney Warren and chaired by Albert L. Brockway – all members of the Society’s Committee on Education.<sup>93</sup> The competition drawings were subsequently exhibited at the ornate new headquarters of the American Fine Arts Society on West 57<sup>th</sup> Street in Midtown.<sup>94</sup> Contemporary journalists described the display in glowing terms. “The exhibition of drawings was larger than in any of the previous competitions, and the character of the work – especially in the First Class – was entirely satisfactory,” wrote a correspondent for the *American Architect and Building News*.<sup>95</sup> A writer for *Architecture and Building* concurred: “The character of the exhibition was excellent.”<sup>96</sup>

Neff’s next move is unclear. In a surviving document, he indicated, somewhat cryptically, that he “studied in Paris.”<sup>97</sup> Like so many aspiring students at Columbia College, the Atelier Masqueray-Chambers, and elsewhere, he undoubtedly intended to enroll at the École des Beaux-Arts. There is, however, no record of him at that

institution, and he more than likely left New York City sometime in mid-1896 and landed in a private Parisian atelier for several months.<sup>98</sup> Although the specific extent of his education in France cannot be determined, this period abroad must have reinforced key aspects of his prior architectural training: his skills in drawing and composing, his knowledge of classical ornament and proportion, and, very likely, his Masqueray-inspired commitment to designing buildings “representative of their time.” Moreover, his Parisian sojourn would have also provided him with unmatched opportunities to view such contemporary construction projects as the Grand Palais and to visit such venerable historical monuments as the Louvre. Neff never completed a baccalaureate degree at any institution, but he was able to draw upon an unusually rich educational background when starting his professional practice.

Neff returned to his hometown of Delaware, Ohio sometime during the latter part of 1896, but two years later decided to relocate to Norfolk, Virginia, where he believed opportunities were expanding for young architects.<sup>99</sup> In partnership initially with H. Irving Dwyer (1850-1907) and subsequently with Thomas P. Thompson (1876-1957), he designed more than a hundred buildings and projects in a career that extended to World War II.<sup>100</sup> Neff’s Beaux-Arts training proved to be infinitely flexible, as he moved nimbly from the neoclassicism of the Monticello Arcade (1906-1907) to the streamlined moderne of the Center Theater and Arena Municipal Auditorium (1941-1943), with frequent forays into the Craftsman and Colonial-revival styles along the way. Reminiscent of his student days, he facilitated a professional camaraderie among his peers that was officially recognized by his election as the first president of the American Institute of Architects’ Virginia chapter (1914-1917).<sup>101</sup> As an editorial appreciation published shortly after his death in 1952 noted: “Although his permanent record, especially for those who did not know him personally, is in the buildings he designed, he left an equally fine memory of his personal traits among his friends.”<sup>102</sup>



A research leave in spring 2006, generously provided by the Office of Academic Affairs, Old Dominion University, allowed me to proceed with this article, which is part of a projected monograph on Neff’s life and work.



## Notes

1. A brief biography of Neff appeared in Betsy L. Fahlman, "Appendix C: Norfolk Architects," in Betsy L. Fahlman, Beth N. Rossheim, David W. Steadman, and Peter Stewart, *A Tricentennial Celebration: Norfolk, 1682-1982* (Norfolk: Chrysler Museum, 1982), 206-207. In 1946, Neff completed a "Personal Reference File" with key biographical information for Norfolk Newspapers, Inc; Neff, "Personal Reference File," 13 July 1946, Norfolk Newspapers, Inc. (now Landmark Communications), Norfolk, Va. Four student drawings by Neff from the 1890s and a presentation book (hereafter Neff Presentation Book) assembled by Neff from around 1931 were given by Mr. and Mrs. A. Parker Neff, Sr. to the Department of Art at Old Dominion University in Norfolk, Virginia in 1992.
2. For a general overview of the architectural profession's transformation during the nineteenth century, see Mary N. Woods, *From Craft to Profession: The Practice of Architecture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, and London: University of California Press, 1999).
3. Joy Wheeler Dow, *American Renaissance: A Review of Domestic Architecture* (New York: William T. Comstock, 1904).
4. Neff, "Personal Reference File."
5. "C. A. Neff, 79, Architect and Engineer, Dies," [Norfolk] *Virginian-Pilot* (9 August 1952): 22; and Neff, "Personal Reference File." Some biographical information on Edward E. Neff may be found in "Neff, Edward E., House," Delaware County, Ohio, United States Department of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places, Building File #87002546. For Edward E. Neff's obituary, see "Mr. E. E. Neff...," in *Index to Deaths, Funerals and Obituaries, Delaware Gazette, 1907-1908* (Delaware, Ohio: privately published, n. d.), 115-116, 117. For Mary Glover Neff's obituary, see "Mrs. Mary Neff...," in *Abstracts of Obituaries, Death and Funeral Notices, Delaware Gazette, 1915* (Delaware, Ohio: privately published, n. d.), 54-55.
6. Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History of the Firm of Neff and Thompson, Architects and Engineers, Norfolk Va.," in Neff Presentation Book. The graduation records of Delaware City Schools are incomplete for the years when Neff would have received his degree (e-mail correspondence: Kathie Burkman, Central Office Secretary, Delaware City Schools, to the author, 11 May 2006). Based on his age, it can be surmised that he graduated from Delaware High School in spring 1891.
7. Neff, "Personal Reference File." Neff is erroneously recorded in the Guard's roster as Clarence N. Neff, age 18, with an enlistment date of 24 March 1891, well ahead of his eighteenth birthday, which fell on 28 May 1891. See "Roster of the Joy Guard, Company K, 14th Regiment of Ohio National Guard, organized at Delaware, Feb'y 13, A.D. 1879," *National Guard Muster Rolls*, bound volume 1035, State Archives Series 162, Ohio Historical Society, Columbus, Oh. On the history of Company K, see *Official History of the Ohio National Guard and Ohio Volunteers*, edited by E. Warren Pratt (Cleveland: Plain Dealer Publishing Company, 1901), 68-70.
8. Neff, "Personal Reference File." According to Jeanette Kraus of Ohio Wesleyan University Alumni Records, Neff is listed in the 1892 and 1893 Ohio Wesleyan University undergraduate catalogs only (telephone conversation: Jeanette Kraus with the author, 2 February 2006). Neff's brother, John Franklin, graduated from Ohio Wesleyan University in 1886 with a bachelor of science degree (email correspondence: Kraus with the author, 27 February 2006). Kraus further confirmed that Adella Maud Neff was enrolled in the University's music program between 1891 and 1893 (telephone conversation: Kraus with the author, 2 February 2006; e-mail correspondence: Kraus to the author, 10 February 2006). That Neff also attended Ohio State University was erroneously reported in his obituaries; see "C. A. Neff, 79, Architect and Engineer, Dies," p. 22; and "Funeral This Afternoon for C. A. Neff, Architect, [Norfolk] *Ledger-Dispatch* (9 August 1952): 5-A. Ohio State University has no record of Neff's enrollment (telephone conversation: Bertha Ihnat, Ohio State University Archives, Columbus, Ohio, with the author, 27 January 2006).
9. Interview: Mrs. A. Parker (Lloyd) Neff, Sr., daughter-in-law of C.A. Neff, with the author, 4 April 2006; Woods, 67.
10. The scholarly literature on the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago is extensive; for a general overview of the Exposition's design and planning, see Neil Harris, Wim de Wit, James Gilbert, and Robert W. Rydell, *Grand Illusions: Chicago's World's Fair of 1893* (Chicago: Chicago Historical Society, 1993).
11. Neil Harris, "Memory and the White City," in Harris et al, 3.
12. John E. Findling, *Chicago's Great World's Fairs*, (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1994), 30.
13. The Joy Guards visited the fairgrounds in October 1892, while they were still under construction, and again in September 1893. See *Official History of the Ohio National Guard and Ohio Volunteers*, 55; "Our Soldier Boys: The 14th Regiment Goes September 5th to Chicago – A Splendid Thing for the Boys," *Delaware Democratic Herald* (24 August 1893): [8]; "Ohio Day at Chicago: The Buckeye State's Celebration at the World's Fair," *Delaware Democratic Herald* (21 September 1893): [2].
14. Wim de Witt, "Building an Illusion: The Design of the World's Columbian Exposition," in Harris et al, 55, 58.
15. Paul R. Baker, Richard Morris Hunt (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press, 1980), xii, xiv, 65, 93, 100-102.
16. Wheaton A. Holden, "The Peabody Touch: Peabody and Stearns of Boston, 1870-1917," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (May 1973): 114.
17. Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History." For a short biographical essay on Yost and Packard, see Jane Ware, *Building Ohio: A Traveler's Guide to Ohio's Urban Architecture* (Wilmington, Ohio: Orange Frazer Press, 2001), 203-204.
18. "Frank L. Packard: Architect, Columbus, Ohio," *Construction News* 20 (26 August 1905): 151; "Obituary: Frank L. Packard, F. A. I. A.," *Western Architect* 32 (November 1923): 132.
19. "Yost, Joseph Warren," in Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 676.
20. For a pictorial spread of the firm's work of the early 1890s, see "Some Recent Work by Yost and Packard, Architects, Columbus, Ohio," *Inland Architect and News Record*, 22 (October 1893), plates following 32. See also "Frank Packard's Columbus," chapter five of Andrew Henderson, *Forgotten Columbus* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 71-84.
21. Ware, 203.
22. Neff does not provide exact dates for his employment at Yost & Packard, only that he worked there for two years; see Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History." There may have been some overlap between his last semester at Ohio Wesleyan University and his employment at the firm.
23. Three small-scale reproductions of the third, fourth, and seventh floor plans for an unidentified hotel by Yost & Packard may be found in the uncatalogued papers of Neff's post-1902 partner, Thomas P. Thompson, at the Sargeant Memorial Collection, Norfolk Public Library, Norfolk, Va. The plans correspond to the general outline of the Chittenden Hotel, particularly the open loggias of the seventh floor. I am grateful to Barbara Powers, a noted Yost and Packard Scholar, for confirming this attribution of the plans. E-mail correspondence: Barbara Powers, Department Head, Inventory and Registration, Ohio Historic Preservation Office, to the author, 10 May 2006.
24. Woods, 66.
25. For a discussion of pioneering academic programs in architecture in the United States, see Turpin C. Bannister, ed., *The Architect at Mid-Century, I: Evolution and Achievement* (New York: Reinhold Publishing Corporation, 1954), especially 96-98; see also Woods, 66-81.
26. Neff's discharge was dated 28 March 1894 and approved on 17 April 1894. See "Roster of the Joy Guard, Company 'K'.
27. Neff, "Personal Reference File;" Clarence Amos Neff student records, Office of the Registrar, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.; confirmed via e-mail correspondence: Brady Sloan to the author, 23 January 2006.
28. On Ware as an educator, see J.A. Chewning, "William Robert Ware at MIT and Columbia," *Journal of Architectural Education* 33 (November 1979): 25-29.
29. David G. De Long, "William R. Ware and the Pursuit of Suitability: 1881-1903," in *The Making of an Architect, 1881-1981: Columbia University in the City of New York*, edited by Richard Oliver (New York: Rizzoli, 1981), 15; Baker, 100.
30. Chewning, 26; Woods, 69.
31. De Long, 14; Steven M. Bedford, "History I: The Founding of the School," in *The Making of an Architect*, 9.
32. James Philip Noffsinger, "The Influence of the Ecole des Beaux-Arts on the Architects of the United States," D.Arch. dissertation (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1955), 106; Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin, "IV. – The School of Architecture," in *A History of Columbia University, 1754-1904: Published in Commemoration of the One Hundred and Fiftieth Anniversary of the Founding of King's College* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1904), 383; Steven M. Bedford and Susan M. Strauss, "History II: 1881-1912," in *The Making of an Architect*, 23.
33. Woods, 69.
34. William R. Ware, quoted in Theodor K. Rohdenburg, *A History of the School of Architecture: Columbia University* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1954), 7-8.
35. Hamlin, "The School of Architecture," 389-390.
36. Woods, 78-79.
37. Hamlin, "The School of Architecture," 395-396.
38. William R. Ware, "Professional Draughtsmen as Special Students in the School of Architecture," [Columbia] *School of Mines Quarterly* 17 (July 1897): 423.
39. Alfred Dwight Foster Hamlin, "Some Alumni of the School of Architecture," *Columbia Alumni News* 9 (22 March 1918): 778.
40. Richard Plunz, "Reflections on Ware, Hamlin, McKim, and the Politics of History on the Cusp of Historicism," in *The History of History in American Schools of Architecture, 1865-1975*, edited by Gwendolyn Wright and Janet Parks (New

- York: Temple Hoyne Buell Center for the Study of American Architecture and Princeton Architectural Press, 1990), 58-63.
41. On McKim's design of Columbia's Morningside heights campus, see Francesco Passanti, "The Design of Columbia in the 1890s: McKim and His Client," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 36 (May 1977): 69-84; and Robert A. M. Stern, Gregory Gilmartin, and John Montague Massengale, *New York 1900: Metropolitan Architecture and Urbanism, 1890-1915* (New York: Rizzoli, 1983), 404-410.
  42. Plunz, 62.
  43. Neff student records, Office of the Registrar, Columbia University; confirmed via e-mail correspondence: Brady Sloan to the author, 23 January 2006.
  44. Rohdenburg, 94, 98.
  45. Bedford and Strauss, 24-33.
  46. Robert A. M. Stern, Thomas Mellins, and David Fishman, *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age* (New York: The Monacelli Press, 1999), 144.
  47. According to Bedford, this usage of "punk" refers to "a very slow-burning and smoky type of match;" see Bedford, 12 n. 52. The nickname was, in fact, a carryover from the Department's earlier quarters in a ramshackle building nearby; see Stern et al., *New York 1880: Architecture and Urbanism in the Gilded Age*, 144. During the rebuilding of Grand Central Depot into Grand Central Terminal at the turn of the twentieth century, the railroad line was submerged into a tunnel beneath Fourth Avenue, which was subsequently renamed Park Avenue; see Kurt C. Schlichting, *Grand Central Terminal: Railroads, Engineering, and Architecture in New York City* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), chapter 2.
  48. Neff student records, Office of the Registrar, Columbia University; confirmed via e-mail correspondence: John Carter to the author, 20 April 2006. I am especially grateful to historian Christopher Gray for his insight into the neighborhood's residential character during the 1890s.
  49. On the design and construction of Grant's Tomb, the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and the two museum projects, see Stern et al., *New York 1900*, 15-17, 88-93, 121-123, 396-403.
  50. Clarence Amos Neff and Thomas P. Thompson, "Chronological History;" Neff student records, Office of the Registrar, Columbia University; confirmed via e-mail correspondence: Brady Sloan to the author, 23 January 2006.
  51. Hamlin, "The School of Architecture," 393.
  52. Bedford and Strauss, 35; Rohdenburg, 25.
  53. Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History." The most thorough analysis of Masqueray's life and work may be found in Alan K. Lathrop, "A French Architect in Minnesota: Emmanuel L. Masqueray, 1861-1917," *Minnesota History* 47 (Summer 1980): 42-56.
  54. "Masqueray, Emmanuel-Louis," in David de Penanrun, *Les Architectes Élèves de l'École des Beaux-Arts, 1793-1907*, second edition, with a preface by J. L. Pascal (Paris: Librairie de la Construction Moderne, 1907), 35. I am grateful to Marc P. Vincent for translating this entry. See also Lathrop, 45.
  55. Lathrop, 45-46.
  56. No diploma date is listed in Masqueray's entry in Penanrun; see Penanrun 342. Masqueray scholar Kate Plowden asserted that he would have met all of the requirements for it by 1885; e-mail correspondence from Kate Plowden to the author, 6 August 2006.
  57. Lathrop, 46.
  58. *Ibid.*, 47.
  59. "Contemporary Architects and Their Work: Mr. E. L. Masqueray, New York and Saint Paul," *The Builder* 100 (16 June 1911): 740.
  60. *Ibid.*, 741.
  61. Lathrop, 47; Mardges Bacon, Ernest Flagg: *Beaux-Arts Architect and Urban Reformer* (New York: Architectural History Foundation; Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: Massachusetts Institute of Technology Press: 1986), 51-52. For biographical information about Chambers, see Francis S. Swales, "Draftsmanship and Architecture as Exemplified by the Work of Walter B. Chambers," *Pencil Points* 9 (September 1928): 543-556; and "Chambers, Walter B.," in Withey and Withey, 116.
  62. Chambers quoted in Swales, 549.
  63. *Ibid.*, 549.
  64. Emmanuel-Louis Masqueray, "Religious Architecture and the Cathedral of Saint Paul and the Pro-Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception," *Western Architect* 12 (October 1908): 43. In this quotation, Masqueray is referring specifically to churches, but his statement may be readily applied to architecture in general. In fact, in a note on the same page, he refers the reader of the article to École professor Julian A. Guadet's *Éléments et théorie de l'architecture* (Paris: Librairie de la construction moderne, 1901-1903), an important French text that articulates this rationalist view.
  65. Stern, et al., *New York 1900*, 22.
  66. Bacon, 53.
  67. Swales, 553.
  68. Swales, 549; Baker, 163.
  69. Untitled notice, *Brochure Series of Architectural Illustration* 3 (July 1897): 111.
  70. Unidentified pamphlet, 1898, cited in Lathrop, 47.
  71. Lathrop, 47.
  72. "Contemporary Architects and Their Work," 741.
  73. *Ibid.*, 741.
  74. Untitled notice, 111.
  75. Unidentified pamphlet, 1898, cited in Lathrop, 47.
  76. "Contemporary Architects and Their Work," 741; Otto J. Teegan, "The B. A. I. D. – Its Past and Future," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 20 (October 1953): 183-184. The Beaux-Arts Society of Architects was officially renamed the Society of Beaux-Arts Architects in 1912; see Bacon, 50, and 327 n. 10. The Society subsequently formed the Beaux Arts Institute of Design in 1916; see Teegan, 184.
  77. Bacon, 50-51.
  78. "Contemporary Architects and Their Work," 741.
  79. "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects – Year 1895-1896," *American Architect and Building News* 50 (12 October 1895): 21.
  80. "The Beaux Arts [sic] Competition," *Inland Architect and News Record* 25 (May 1895): 39.
  81. Edgar A. Josselyn, secretary's report, "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," *American Architect and Building News* 54 (12 December 1896): 91.
  82. Ware, 425; Rohdenburg, 14-15, 20.
  83. On the organizational structure of competitions sponsored by the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, see John F. Harebeson, *The Study of Architectural Design: With Special Reference to the Program of the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design, with a foreword by Lloyd Warren* (New York: Pencil Points Press, Inc., 1926).
  84. "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects – Year 1895-1896," 20-21.
  85. "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," *Architecture and Building* 24 (18 January 1896): 35. The prospectus for the Class B Programme only was also published in "Society of Beaux Arts [sic] Architects," *Inland Architect and News Record* 27 (February 1896): 8.
  86. "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," 35.
  87. *Ibid.*, 35.
  88. On the Houston Club student competition, see Edward Potts Cheyney, *History of the University of Pennsylvania: 1740-1940* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1940), 340-342; and George E. Thomas and David B. Brownlee, *Building America's First University: An Historical and Architectural Guide to the University of Pennsylvania* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000), 171-172.
  89. Warren Powers Laird, "Sequel [Houston Hall Competition]," 12 October 1939, in Warren Powers Laird, "Records of a Consulting Practice," 62, unpublished typescript, Rare Book Room, Fisher Fine Arts Library, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 2-3.
  90. Both of Neff's drawings are signed C. A. Neff and stamped "Atelier Masqueray, 123 E. 23rd St., N. Y."
  91. "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," 35.
  92. Baker, 452ff.
  93. Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History;" "Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," 35; "The Beaux-Arts Society Competition," *Architecture and Building* 24 (25 April 1896): 203; "The Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," *American Architect and Building News* 52 (2 May 1896): 47. One biographical source noted – it would seem erroneously – that "Neff received a diploma from the Society of Beaux Arts, Architects, New York;" see "Without Peers: In the Architectural World of this Great and Growing Section: Messrs. Dwyer & Neff," [Norfolk] *Virginian-Pilot*, Twentieth Century Edition (June [8], 1900): 14.
  94. "The Beaux-Arts Society Competition," 203.
  95. "The Society of Beaux-Arts Architects," 47.
  96. "The Beaux-Arts Society Competition," 203.
  97. Neff, "Personal Reference File." For his Paris sojourn, Neff did not provide dates but placed it in sequence before his arrival in Norfolk in 1898.
  98. For a listing of American students at the École, see Noffsinger, 106-118. I am grateful to Kate Plowden for suggesting that Neff may have sought only private instruction in Paris.
  99. "Without Peers," 14; Neff, "Personal Reference File;" Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History."
  100. For an extensive list of Neff's buildings, see entries under "Dwyer, H. Irving (Dwyer and Neff)" and "Neff, Clarence Amos, Sr. (Neff and Thompson)" in John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The Virginia Architects, 1835-1955: A Biographical Dictionary* (Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1997), 127, 319-323. See also "Thompson, Thomas P.," in Wells and Dalton, 447.
  101. Neff, "Personal Reference File;" Neff and Thompson, "Chronological History;" "American Institute of Architects: List of Chapters, 1915," *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 3 (March 1915): 145.
  102. "C.A. Neff," part 1, 6.





Advertising booklet for Ezra Kelley's Whale Oil, c. 1869. Courtesy Mystic Seaport.

# The *Charles W. Morgan*

## AND THE 19TH-CENTURY AMERICAN WHALING TRADE

STEVEN M. PURDY

Whaling had been established as a lucrative source of revenue in Europe for over three hundred years by the time of the European settlement of North America in the seventeenth century. So with an abundance of whales offshore here, it was natural that whaling would become a prominent part of the New World economy. By the mid-18th century the American sailors of Nantucket had become the world's premier whalers. They traded directly with Britain and quickly became the primary supplier. Their greatest opportunity came in 1736 when the English began lighting the streets of London. Several other major cities in Europe were seeking burnable oil as well, especially sperm whale oil, because of its long burn time and its clear, bright, smokeless and odorless light. As suppliers of a desired strategic product the American whalers gained an inordinate diplomatic, political and economic prominence in the world.

After American independence, the American whalers' fortunes and their clout became even greater. Rebounding quickly from the economic difficulties that had resulted from the American Revolution, they resumed global hunting and dealt directly with European powers to reestablish their export markets. Another slump occurred in the first quarter of the nineteenth century resulting from the Napoleonic wars. But the Americans had sustained their personal connections with Europe throughout the conflicts and exploited them, rebounded, and then dominated traditional whaling to its final demise in the first quarter of the twentieth century.<sup>1</sup>

In the first half of the nineteenth century, oil was the primary whale product and illumination was the largest market. Some cheaper whale oil, often called train oil, may have gone into the lower levels of society, but pricey sperm oil was the premium product. Because of its cost most sperm oil was not used for lighting by individuals, but as lamp fuel for public lighting, street lighting, government buildings, and lighthouse beacons for which it provided nonpareil performance. Sperm whale candles were also an important product. At about three times the price of tallow candles, however, their market was primarily for the wealthy and for public lighting. Sperm whale candles burned longer, produced a clear white light with almost no smoke or odor, and did not melt

down in warm weather. The light from one sperm whale candle is the origin of the term candlepower, still used as a measure of illumination today, though now more technically described.

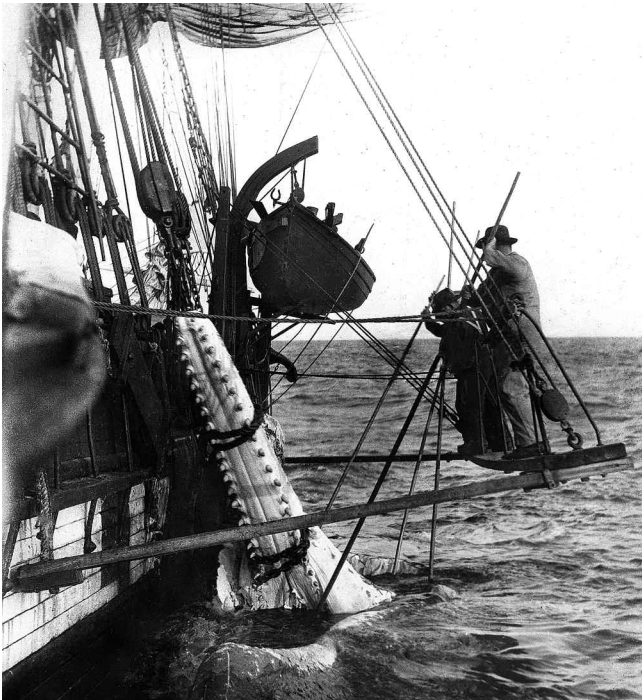
Large-scale industrialization, well underway in Great Britain in the late 1700s, soon spread to the Western world. Mechanization, the replacement of much human and draft-animal labor with machines, expanded through the nineteenth century and beyond. For the whaling industry there was a massive change in its principal market from illumination to lubrication for the new machinery. With the explosive expansion of the Industrial Revolution beginning early in the second quarter of the



The *Charles W. Morgan* under sail. c. 1920. A. F. Packard. Courtesy Mystic Seaport.

nineteenth century, demand for oil, particularly sperm oil, as a lubricant for machinery and industrial processes shot up and prices escalated dramatically.<sup>2</sup> By 1825 whale oil was being attracted away from the consumer lighting market by high prices resulting from the demand for it as a lubricant. As whale oil became almost exclusively an industrial product its impact on nineteenth-century society became indirect. Its role was in the background





(L to R): The crew of the *Charles W. Morgan* secure a whale to the side of the ship during an excursion off the coast of California, 1903. The *Charles W. Morgan* docks at Old Merrill's Wharf, New Bedford, Massachusetts to unload barrels of whale oil. Courtesy Mystic Seaport.

lubricating machinery and manufacturing processes, rather than influencing daily life directly as a consumer product. However, its overall effect was powerful and pervasive. Without the availability of whale oil to fill the lubrication gap until the exploitation of petroleum later in the century, the growth of the Industrial Revolution would have been substantially slowed.

In filling this sudden unexpected industrial demand American whaling flourished and became industrialized itself. As whaling voyages became global and two to three years or more in duration and whaling ships became larger, the center of the industry shifted from the island community of Nantucket to the deeper mainland harbor of New Bedford, Massachusetts. The new harbor was better suited to building, berthing and servicing large ships, industrial operations and distribution, and improved integration with the expanding industrial economy. More than a third of the nearly 15,000 traditional whaling voyages originated in New Bedford. Nantucket continued to be active, though on a smaller scale, remaining the second port of the era with over 2000 voyages.<sup>3</sup>

These long voyages to catch the fifty to sixty whales needed to fill a ship were often for over 25,000 miles and returned 70,000 or more gallons of oil. They resulted in a new type of wooden sailing ship, the purpose-built whaleship. About half of the vessels used in the industry were built especially for the work. They utilized heavy timber construction, second only to military vessels in strength, to withstand the stresses of the voyages and of processing whales weighing over 100,000 pounds, with large interior volume to accommodate years of supplies

outbound and heavy cargoes of oil on the return trip. The last of these unique vessels, the *Charles W. Morgan*, is now preserved at Mystic Seaport as perhaps the most significant surviving artifact of this essential nineteenth-century industry.

By the 1820s alternative lighting products were rapidly entering the consumer market to replace scarce and expensive train and sperm oil; improvements were being made in processing other animal and vegetable oils into stable, practical, and less expensive lighting fluids. Camphene, a mixture of redistilled turpentine and alcohol became popular despite some issues with volatility. The processing of lard oil and the design of lard oil lamps was continuously improved. The stearic acid removed from lard oil in processing was used to make improved and less expensive candles. Called adamantine, the new candles were firmer and easier to light than tallow and spermaceti candles, and four times cheaper than spermaceti.

Coal oil, the original kerosene, was extracted from coal to meet the need for lubricants, but it turned out to be even better as an illuminant, becoming the most popular lamp fuel. Another coal derivative, manufactured gas, became the dominant illuminant in densely settled areas. Most of the gas of the "gaslight" era both here and in Britain was not the natural gas that we use today but this locally produced coal product.<sup>4</sup> The driving away of whale oil from the consumer illumination market by price provided opportunity and motivation for the development of a range of lower cost alternatives and for more consumer choice in lighting. Many of the canny whaling investors moved capital in other sectors of the new economy and rapidly took many of their whaleships out of service.

Vessel tonnage decreased by over 60% between 1860 and 1870 and the number of ships in service by half.

But the whaling industry still operated in the historic background as a powerful financial engine, not only for its owners but for the nation as a whole. Throughout the nineteenth century as much as 60% of whale products were exported annually, primarily to England, Germany and France. This improved the U.S. balance of trade and brought much needed foreign funds into its capital base. Domestically, the industry had low overhead and did not require substantial reinvestment to maintain momentum, so it generated large amounts of capital that could be invested in other sectors. Whaling owners invested in textiles, clothing and shoe manufacturing, smelting and metalworking, transportation, communications, and many other aspects of the new industrial economy, and eventually in petroleum. New Bedford was twice rated the richest city in the world in per capita assets, the first time from whaling revenue and the second from investment of whaling profits in textile manufacturing.

The traditional whaling industry played its most dynamic economic role, then, in a short period of time, from the late 1820s through the 1860s. But its story was far from over. As sperm and whale oil slipped out of the consumer market and into the background to lubricate industrial processes and machinery, the whale product most commonly in the nineteenth-century public eye was baleen – inaccurately but almost universally called “whalebone,” for baleen is composed of keratin, the same material from which our hair and fingernails are made, giving it resilience, durability, and toughness. Baleen had many industrial and consumer applications where those functional properties were needed; it can be said to be the plastic of its time. Whalebone, as we know it, is not the skeleton of the whale, but the plastic-like material that hangs in strips, or plates from the upper jaw of filter-feeding whales.

Male and female corsets, panniers, accessories to exaggerate the hips, and other devices to reshape the body had been part of court styles off and on for hundreds of years, and whalebone was often used as their structural component. Earlier in the nineteenth century there was a brief period when a “wasp waist” look for men was favored, and that was achieved with whalebone corsets. Other whalebone products in the consumer market throughout the century were

simple items such as flexible buggy and riding whip handles, policeman's clubs, parasol and umbrella ribs, combs, various decorations and other components in hat and dressmaking, billiard cushion springs, fishing rods, boot shanks, shoe horns, divining rods, small flexible medical implements, and of course skirt hoops, corset stays and busks. The fibers trimmed from the edges of the baleen plates were used for furniture stuffing, brush bristles, and packing material. These items were used in the course of daily life with little thought of their cetacean origin.

In the mid-nineteenth century whalebone was used prominently for skirt hoops and corset stays; recall Scarlett O'Hara in her hoopskirt being laced into her corset and admonished about her eating habits. Later in the century whalebone was still used in corsets and also in crinolines and bustles for women to attain the famed hourglass figure, and sometimes for men to achieve a trimmer look. Some women, particularly those on the stage, had their lowest ribs surgically removed in order to achieve the proper body taper for the hourglass look. The whalebone corset is iconic of the late Victorian period. Though tiny waists were admired, the essence of the style was not necessarily an extremely small waist, but the proper relative proportions of upper body, waist, and lower body to achieve the hourglass look. The whalebone corset shaped and supported the bust and tapered the waist and transition to the hips, and the skirt and its whalebone accessories defined the lower body.

In the 1880s the operational center of the whaling industry shifted again, demonstrating its roles as both actor and reactor in the dynamics of the nineteenth



The crew of the *Charles W. Morgan* melts whale blubber in the try pots on deck, which turns the blubber into oil, 1903. Courtesy Mystic Seaport.

century. The industry's primary revenue source changed from whale and sperm oil to baleen because of its use in Victorian fashion. San Francisco had rapidly developed as a port after the discovery of gold in 1849. The overland telegraph opened in 1859, and the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869; that combination of events made it possible to manage one's shipping from across the country and avoid the Cape Horn roundtrip on every voyage. Though the major markets remained on the East Coast and in Europe, San Francisco quickly became the largest whaling port in the country.<sup>5</sup> Nearly 1200 voyages were sailed out of San Francisco making it the third largest port in the traditional American whaling era.

Improved communications, logistics, and operating economies were primary facilitators of the move to California, but the Victorian fashion market was the driver. Baleen had become the premier whale product and bowhead whales produced the best baleen, theirs being up to 14 feet in length and having a very fine texture and excellent flexibility and resilience, ideal for corsets. A large bowhead whale could provide a ton of valuable whalebone. The best bowhead hunting was in the northern Pacific and western Arctic. Aboard ship the baleen was removed from the upper jaw of the whale, cleaned by scraping and rubbing with wet sand, and thoroughly dried. Prompt and thorough cleaning was essential; otherwise the product developed a permanent fishy odor which understandably greatly lowered its value in the market. The whalebone was given another cleaning ashore, again to prevent odor. It was graded into "size bone," six feet or more in length, and "undersize bone," less than six feet. Baleen of right whales was separated out from the bowhead product as it was usable but coarser and less pliable and had less value. Otherwise there was no further processing by the whaling company. At the Arctic Oil Company in San Francisco the bone was stored in a concrete "bone house" with iron doors and shutters to keep out rats, and the building could be flooded in case of fire, avoiding the cost of insurance.

During the late Victorian era San Francisco was the primary source of baleen for the world. When a sale was made the bone was shipped by rail to U.S. fashion centers or to an East Coast port for ocean shipment to Europe. In the local markets skilled whalebone cutters trimmed off the edge fibers to be used for furniture stuffing and brush bristles. The baleen was soaked again and given a fine polish, then heated to soften it, cut to length, split to

width, "sided" to square the edges, blacked, and shipped to manufacturers for final use.

As an established style the corseted figure carried through into the early Edwardian period. It was a manifestation of the power of the consumer market that resulted from the availability of disposable income earned in the factories, shops, and service businesses of the new industrial economy. Many people now had more money

than required to survive and consumer products

were available or became available. People were able and willing to spend on luxury

products such as trendy clothing. The

whalebone corset was an essential fashion item not only for the upper

classes, but for the new

middle class as well. Other

manifestations of the

Industrial Revolution that

are now core to our modern

consumer economy are

advertising, product

differentiation, the idea that

one product is better than

another based on claims of

excellence, promotional

packaging, and the

international spread of

styles, trends, and fads as a

result of improved domestic

and international

communication and

transportation. Markets

could now be consciously

created and destroyed, and

those markets created rather

than responded to supply

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Advertisement for Redfern Corsets, c. 1900.

Baleen had always had value, but was until the 1880s it was just a byproduct of oil whaling. As oil voyages decreased, baleen was in much reduced supply and its price soared to well over a hundred dollars a pound for use as corset stays, industrial parts, and other products requiring resilience and durability. Baleen's increased value gave traditional whaling a nearly fifty-year reprieve. Price was extremely volatile depending on the amount of "bone" in the market at any given time. In 1904 baleen prices peaked at over \$180 a pound.

Much of the market for American baleen was in France, the fashion leader of the Western world. And it was there that the final end of the baleen market and of traditional U.S. whaling was decided, for in 1907 prominent Paris designer Paul Poiret introduced an immediately popular straight-line women's couture – and the days of the hourglass figure and the whalebone corset were soon over. The concurrent advent of the brassiere, which supported and shaped the breasts from above rather than below, contributed to the style change. The whalebone market collapsed quickly. In 1908 the western Arctic fleet took only twenty-four bowheads and returned





(L to R): Ladies modelling whalebone corsets, c. 1870. Hulton Archive/Getty Images. Advertisement for H. Giraud Et Cie, London, c. 1870.

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\*\*\*\*\*  
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30, GT. PORTLAND ST.,  
LONDON, W.

to find that whalebone was selling below their cost. The San Francisco whaling operators began to lay up their steam whaleships and established a "Whalebone Trust" headquartered in New Bedford, the main distribution point, to try to force the price up.

Moreover, a process for the mass production of spring steel was invented in 1909, and it took over many of the traditional roles of baleen including corset stays. Early plastic-type products, such as celluloid, were also now in production with more in development. Celluloid took the place of baleen in men's detachable stiff collars and cuffs and other small items that might have been made from whalebone. By 1910 the whalebone market was nearly gone. The Whalebone Trust controlled what market there was for six years, buying all of the baleen coming into the U.S. and selling it for what they could get. Its last sale was made in 1913 at \$1.35 per pound, about \$23 in our money – only 12% of the peak price just nine years earlier.



By the early 1920s the final American whaling voyages in square-rigged wooden vessels were being sailed. When the *Charles W. Morgan*, a venerable vessel with an eighty-year career and thirty-seven global voyages behind her, completed her last voyage in 1921 there were less than twenty whaleships active in the country. At this time a new whaling industry was developing in Europe, principally in Norway, utilizing a more modern system

with high-speed motor-powered chase vessels and explosive weapons to hunt rorquals, a prolific fast-swimming baleen species that had not been accessible to open-boat whaling because of their speed. The primary market was in Europe for oil for food fat, particularly in oleomargarine. To participate would have required restructuring and retooling the American industry. American whaling investors were long gone into other pursuits and given the many other opportunities in the growing American economy there was no domestic interest in the new whaling business.

The remaining whaleships were broken up or simply left to decay in their final ports of call. The fleet that had numbered a thousand active ships at its peak, three-quarters of which were American and half of those homeported in New Bedford, had dwindled to one lonely vessel,

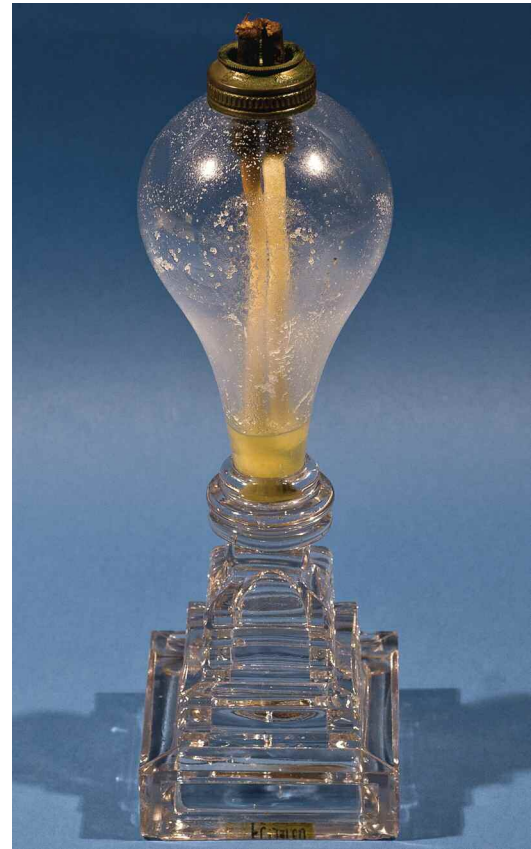
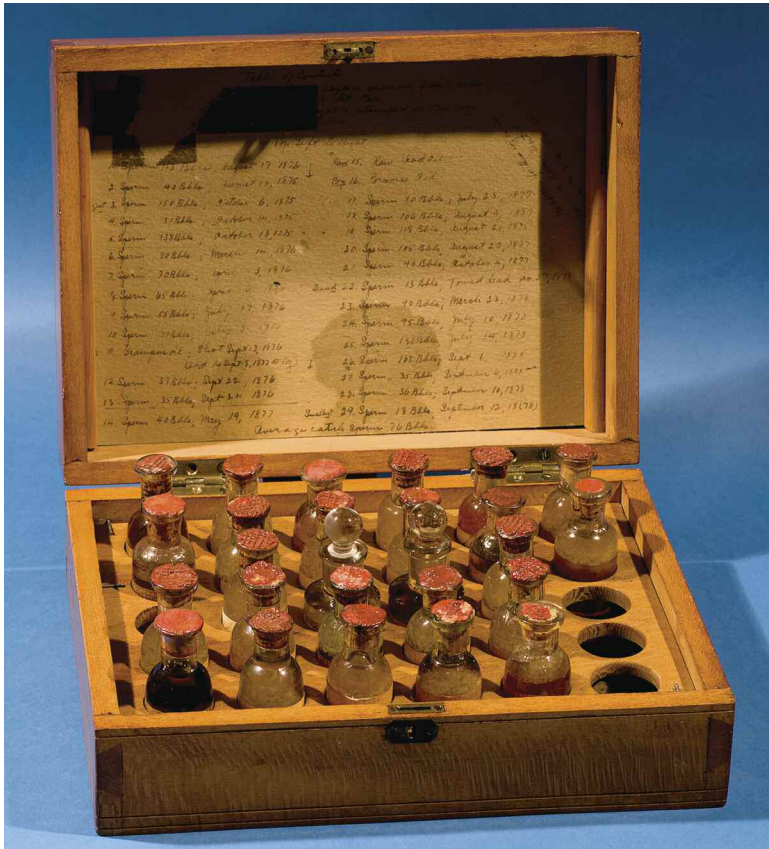
and she was in danger of disappearing. Despite attempts by local individuals and organizations to raise funds to preserve her, the *Charles W. Morgan* lay deteriorating in New Bedford. Ultimately she was saved through the efforts of Colonel Edward H. R. Green, who preserved and exhibited the ship from the mid-1920s to the 1930s at Round Hill, his nearby South Dartmouth estate, where she had more than 1.7 million visitors. Upon Green's death the ship needed a new home; in 1941 the *Morgan* came to Mystic Seaport where she remains, preserved as a symbol of American maritime history and the energy, creativity, and enterprise that helped create our industrial consumer economy. The *Charles W. Morgan* is the world's last surviving wooden whaleship and America's

oldest commercial vessel still afloat. There were over 2700 ships used in the traditional American whaling period – but only she remains.

Other than her unusual longevity in having sailed actively for eighty years, four times the life of the average nineteenth-century wooden commercial vessel, the *Charles W. Morgan* is a typical whaleship and a representative icon of her industry. In her long life she sailed

through the peak, decline, and fall of the American commercial whaling industry. The makeup of her voyages in product varied as she dealt with the vicissitudes of hunting whales and wide fluctuations in product value from one voyage to another. She reflects the history of the industry well.

**The *Charles W. Morgan*  
is the world's last  
surviving wooden  
whaleship and America's  
oldest commercial vessel  
still afloat.**



(L to R): Whale oil samples in box. Glass whale oil lamp, 19th century. Courtesy Mystic Seaport.

The *Morgan* was built in 1841 as the whaling industry was approaching its peak. She is a structurally and operationally typical medium-sized whaleship, crewed, equipped and used as purpose-built whaleships were, and the records of her voyages are detailed and well preserved. In period money on her first voyage the *Morgan* brought back sperm oil valued at \$44,300, whale oil \$8,300, and baleen \$3,400, totaling \$56,000 against her building and outfitting cost of about \$57,000. The ship was not quite paid for, and after paying the crew's shares was probably not profitable on that first trip. Though built as a "sperm" whaleship, over her career 49% of her revenue was from sperm oil, 31% train oil and 20% baleen, reflecting the flexibility of the industry. Her sixth voyage (1859-1863), her largest in revenue, was primarily bowhead whale oil and baleen.

Following the industry trend, the *Morgan* sailed seventeen short voyages between 1887 and 1905 from San Francisco, nearly half of her career total, shipping her cargoes east on the Transcontinental Railroad. When she returned to New Bedford she never went around Cape Horn again, instead pursuing sperm whales in the Atlantic. Her longest-term owners, the Wing family, sold her to Capt. Benjamin Cleveland in 1915. In a way, that sale by the Wings, among the last traditional agents in the business, marks the end of traditional American industrial whaling management. She made four more entrepreneurial voyages in the Atlantic completing her 37<sup>th</sup> voyage in 1921. The bark *Wanderer* completed a

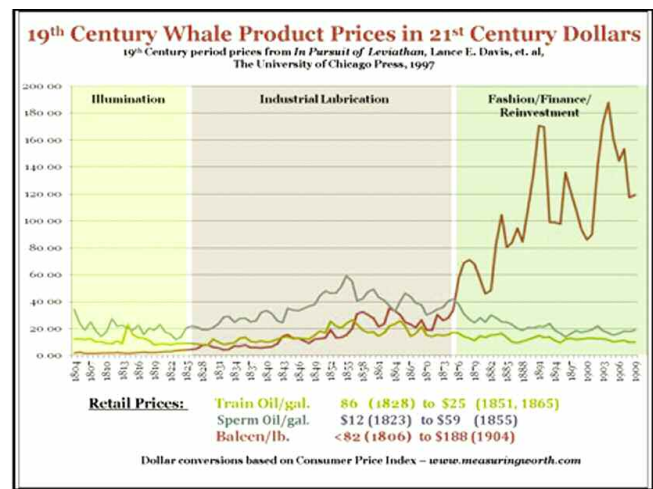
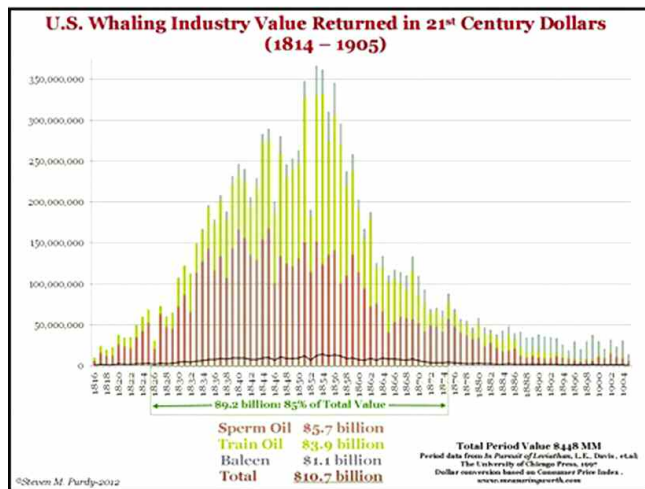
voyage that year, another in 1923, and was lost at the start of an intended last voyage in 1924. Although a few voyages were made in other vessels during those years, enterprise whaling in square-rigged sailing ships had ended. The last American whaling voyage appears to have been made out of San Francisco in 1928.



To preserve the richness of her heritage, Mystic Seaport has recently undertaken a five- year, \$7,000,000 restoration of the *Charles W. Morgan*, her most extensive refit since 1881. She has been relaunched and is now in the process of being rigged. A historic ceremonial 38th voyage of the historic vessel to several New England ports is planned for the summer of 2014. Additional information on the *Charles W. Morgan*, the restoration project, and her commemorative voyage can be found at [www.mysticseaport.org](http://www.mysticseaport.org).

The author: Steve Purdy is the Lead Interpreter for the whaleship *Charles W. Morgan* at Mystic Seaport. This article is adapted from a monograph, *A Great American Enterprise: Traditional American Whaling and the Industrial Revolution*, which received the 2013 John Gardner Maritime Research Award and is being prepared for publication.





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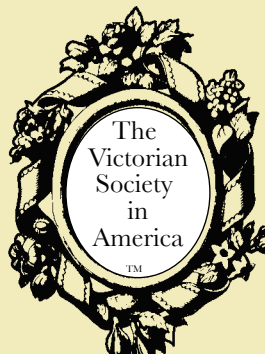
# 19 NINETEENTH CENTURY

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Wax fruit dome, American, c. 1855. From the collection of David J. Marshall, The Antique Room, Brooklyn, New York. Photo courtesy Alan Kalc Photography.

# Capturing an Era Under Glass

JOHN WHITENIGHT

Many people still hold the stereotypical view of the Victorian era as a time of austere prudishness and deadly seriousness. But, in fact, many of the decorative arts of the period were the exact opposite –showy, whimsical, lighthearted, and sometimes even a bit risqué. The word “minimal” was not a part of the Victorian vocabulary. Among the multifarious objects in photographs in the crowded nineteenth-century Victorian parlor – along with the silk, velvet, marble and carved rosewood – are often parlor domes, blown glass forms usually referred to during the period as “shades.” In virtually any photographic view of a parlor during the mid to late Victorian era one finds objects under one or more of these glass coverings.

From the standpoint of practicality, what could better protect a treasured Parian statue or a delicate arrangement of wax flowers, shell work, or exotic birds than a glass dome? Its usefulness was two-fold – it eliminated the dust that collected on parlor furnishings, and it also prevented curious fingers from touching the precious contents. This extraordinarily thin bubble of clear glass extended an invitation to the viewer to come closer and peer into it. Under the glass dome a world has been created that teases the observer by saying, “Look at me, contemplate me and enjoy me, but you cannot touch.” Thanks to these protective coverings, magnificent examples of Victorian parlor art have been preserved for us from a time when pride in artistry and workmanship was the rule, not the exception.

## The Heyday of Parlor Pastimes

The technological advances of the nineteenth century were like none before. Unprecedented riches and raw materials from both domestic and foreign resources were made readily available. In the civilized world more wealth

and greater advancement became attainable for a broader group than at anytime in the past, particularly to the mushrooming middle class. And along with this came the leisure time that allowed people to pursue artistic interests at will.

It was at this point in history that the concept of parlor arts began to develop at a rapid pace. This manifested itself in a multitude of ladies’ magazines and other periodicals such as *Godey’s Lady’s Book*, published in Philadelphia by Louis A. Godey between 1830 and 1878. Along with featured short stories, fashion plates, and tips on household management came monthly articles on the latest rage in parlor art. The word *art* has great significance here because during the nineteenth century books and articles regarding parlor pastimes never used the word “craft.” One did hair art, or one became a shell or wax artist. One studied the art of skeletonizing leaves or followed a course in the art of taxidermy. And one’s hair art, wax art or shell art was judged by one’s peers or at a variety of exhibitions at a local level or at grander venues such as London’s Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851 and the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 in Philadelphia. The critical standards of aesthetics, such as the elements of line, shape, color and texture along with the principles of proportion, balance, rhythm and center of interest, were used and applied to these compositions under domes.

Parlor pastimes were not relegated solely to the home. With the passion for decorative art forms under glass there developed cottage industries in America and abroad that not only sold a plethora of artists’ materials for creating these arrangements of wax, shells and stuffed birds, but also supplied ready-made examples for those who were not necessarily adept. Individuals skilled in the



Pair of male resplendent quetzels. James Gardner, London, c. 1870. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Alan Kolc Photography.



art of wax flower and fruit making as well as hair work traveled between Europe and America giving lectures along with selling their manuals or treatises for the production of such fanciful arrangements.

This was also the time when the art of taxidermy reached its zenith, with hundreds of taxidermists having



"The Dentist Monkey" by J. Phalibois, Paris, c. 1875. An intoxicated monkey gentleman opens his mouth wide as the leering monkey dentist brings the dental tool closer and closer. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Alan Kolc Photography.

establishments in London, as well as in Paris and New York. The exploration and colonization of faraway lands, particularly by the British, brought an abundant supply of bird and animal skins as well as insects, shells and minerals literally to the doorsteps of these taxidermy artists in London. Family taxidermy businesses thrived and were passed from generation to generation throughout the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth. And thanks to explorer/naturalists such as Charles Darwin, the wonderment of exotica and the desire to acquire things from the natural world continued to become a driving force during the Victorian era. Nature could be neatly "contained" under glass in any respectable parlor, where it served not only as decoration but also as a stimulus for educational conversation.

Another craze that reached the height of its development at this time was the art of creating automatons. In this case, Paris was the center. These delightful mechanical *scènes animées* under domes were created for the sole pleasure of amusement, primarily for the wealthy. As if the mechanical movements of these ingenious contraptions were not enough, they also played

beautiful melodies, with the pull of a string or wind of a key. As the world entered the twentieth century electricity would replace the wind-up mechanism and the grandchildren of the founders of earlier businesses specializing in automatons provided electrified automated figures for store window displays. The parlor mantel no longer reigned supreme as the realm of these marvelous mechanical musical displays under glass.

### A Bounty of Bogus Blooms

Amongst the ennobling arts that are taught, and which tend to raise the mind above the every-day routine of life, is that of faithfully representing our Mother Nature in her various works. There is nothing more elevating to the human mind than a contemplation and study of the beautiful; and there is but little, if anything, more exquisite in nature than her wealth of blossoms.

Charles Pepper and Madame Elise, 1858<sup>1</sup>

Victorians were passionate about flowers. Not only did they appreciate them as objects of beauty; they even went so far as to give them their own language, and during the second half of the nineteenth century numerous books were published on their symbolism. The most famous of these was Kate Greenaway's *The Language of Flowers* (1884). In this small volume of illustrations and verses dedicated to flora, we learn, among other things, that pansies are for thoughts, daisies are for innocence, and carnations for pure and ardent love.<sup>2</sup> In an age where romanticism reigned supreme the adoration of flowers thrived and bloomed.

Beeswax had been employed in works of art and decoration since the time of ancient Rome in the creation of encaustic paintings, and later in religious effigies during the early Christian and Renaissance periods. During the late eighteenth century and into the early nineteenth the popularity of small wax portraits or profiles was common whether commemorating a royal person or capturing the likeness of the master and his wife from a prominent household. Wax allowed itself to be softened, molded, cut and manipulated into a wide variety of shapes and forms. Once it was properly bleached to white, colored pigments could be added to give it the desired hue.

But no one had embraced beeswax the way Victorians did. One of the many period enterprises was the art of simulating nature in wax, particularly flowers. The idea of creating floral arrangements that never faded was both intriguing and delighting. If one wished to have roses mixed with tulips in the same bouquet it was possible, for these artificial compositions knew no season. They existed solely to please the viewer and stimulate the senses.

In England the seeds of wax flower making were sown in the 1830s. The Mintorn family, who resided at 36 Soho Square in London, made many of the most important contributions to this art form. Two brothers, John and Horatio, along with their sister who came to be known as Mrs. Mogridge, all the children of a talented pictorial painter, were presented at an early age with a gold medal



for their skill at modeling wax flowers; later they received the high honor of being appointed "Wax Modellers to Her Majesty."<sup>3</sup> Today examples of wax flower modeling by the Mintorns and Mrs. Blackman (niece of Mrs. Modridge) may be seen at the museum of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew; during the late nineteenth century Mrs. Blackman was commissioned by the director of Kew, William Thistleton-Dyer, to create over two dozen specimens of orchids in wax, and she did so in a most realistic manner.<sup>4</sup> These extremely detailed and lifelike botanical specimens remain as a tribute to the Mintorns' and Mrs. Blackman's artistry in wax.

Another name associated with the early days of wax flower making is that of Emma Peachey of London. Soon after the young Victoria ascended the throne, Emma Peachey called at Buckingham Palace with a bouquet of wax flowers that she wished to have placed in a spot where the Queen might see them. The Queen did in fact notice them with delight and inquired after the artist. Shortly thereafter, Miss Peachey wrote to the Palace informing Her Majesty that she was intent on pursuing a career modeling wax flowers. The Queen suggested to the Lord Chamberlain that Miss Peachey might be given a royal warrant as her "Artiste in Wax Flowers."<sup>5</sup>

With her royal appointment in hand, Emma Peachey's wax flower-modeler business flourished. In 1840 she was hired to recreate Victoria and Albert's wedding bouquets in wax as well as to make thousands of white wax roses to be given as bridal favors.<sup>6</sup> After having such an honor bestowed upon her, orders poured into her studio and Emma's days of financial struggle were over. Her reputation gained her the privilege of submitting two entries to the wax flower display at the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851; these consisted of two colossal glass domes each six feet tall, one containing an enormous vase of wax fruit, the other a mammoth bouquet of wax flowers representing almost every type known to the botanist, "from the honeysuckle of the cottage garden to the rarest and most exotic from the East."<sup>7</sup> Miss Peachey soon removed her entries, however, because she was allotted a booth too close to the glass roof and feared the worst from the sun's rays. Today, the whereabouts of these gargantuan wax arrangements under glass is unknown, but we do know that Miss Peachey, never being one to miss a financial opportunity, exhibited her masterpieces in wax at her home, 33 Rathbone Place, Oxford Street, where she reportedly had over 50,000 visitors; the London press were lyrical in their praise of them.<sup>8</sup>

The existing example closest to Emma Peachey's virtuoso work is the probably the one discovered in Hudson, New York, and illustrated here. This marvelous dome almost three feet high and over two feet wide rests on its own custom-made walnut center table and contains a two-foot high arrangement of wax flowers in a large wicker basket. This extravaganza was believed to have been displayed in the lobby of a Boston hotel for the last quarter of the nineteenth century until it fell out of favor and was relegated to the basement for decades



(Top to Bottom): Wax nosegay (detail), American, c. 1860. Wax flower basket in dome on original grooved center table. American, c. 1875. Private collection. Photos courtesy Alan Kolc Photography.



Stereoview of Mrs. Sohler's wax flower exhibit at the Philadelphia Centennial, c. 1876. Photo courtesy of Free Library of Philadelphia.

where, miraculously, the wax flowers were found to have been preserved beautifully.

### Meanwhile in America

This passion for making wax flowers quickly crossed the Atlantic in the 1850s and by the time of the Centennial Exhibition of 1876 Americans had already embraced the art and exhibited their talents in the medium. A stereopticon view of a display entitled "Miss E. Sohler's exhibit" included an array of examples without their protective glass domes as well as magnificent examples presented in shadowboxes.

The tools needed for creating such astonishing wax flowers were expensive. In the 1850s, one small gilt brass grape leaf form cost fifty cents, the equivalent of half of a day's wages for the average worker.<sup>9</sup> During the pre-Civil War era and into the late 1860s naturalism was the ideal. Each wax flower was created to resemble the genuine bloom that served as its model. To accomplish this it was suggested that the wax artist have two perfect specimens of the flower being copied. One was to be taken apart petal by petal and traced on paper, cut out, and numbered in proper sequence, and the other was to serve as the model for the whole wax flower. Roses were considered a good

example with which to begin; as one's skill developed one could graduate to the likes of an aster or a large dahlia.

A rare set of wax-flower making implements with a Chester County, Pennsylvania, provenance illustrates all that was required to create a bouquet of wax blooms. Not only were the powdered pigments, molding tools, tin petal cutters and original hand traced petal patterns included but also twenty-five gilt brass leaf forms for making plaster molds into which sheets of wax could be pressed. This entire kit is stored in a small wallpaper covered box from the 1850s lined with newspaper pages decrying the horrors of slavery and urging its abolition. On the underside of the small interior box which holds the petal patterns is the inscription,

Mrs. Supplee  
When you use this box use it  
well and do not soil the patterns that  
are in it and so good bye  
From Your fine and  
most loving sister

Kate Crowell

In order to make a wax flower, the artist became an



amateur botanist by learning the anatomy of flowers; technical terms such as stamen, pistil, anthers, calyx, sepals and petiole appear frequently in the illustrated instructions. Once learned, the wax artist could then set out to duplicate nature.

Along with wax flowers, arrangements of wax fruit were created by the wax artist and also placed under large domes. Many types of genuine fruit, ranging from the humble apple to the rare and exotic pineapple, were cast in plaster as two-part molds. The unmolded wax apple or pear was then painted in great detail to produce a piece of tempting fruit that would ever remain at its full peak of ripeness, never to decompose. *Godey's Lady's Book* published six articles in 1856 on the art of making this sort of facsimile.<sup>10</sup> The naturalism of the 1850s and 1860s dwindled in wax modeling as flowers and fruit of the latter part of the century took on a stylized appearance. Petals once crafted from thin sheets of wax were replaced with those cut from muslin coated in paraffin, a by-product of fossil fuel. Paraffin was also used to coat plaster casts of fruit giving an unrealistic look to the ubiquitous bowls of wax fruit found on many a middle-class dining room table of the early twentieth century. The beauty and subtlety of beeswax had long passed its heyday.

## Flowers from the Sea

Sea Shell, Sea Shell,  
Sing me a song, O Please!  
A song of ships and sailor men,  
And parrots, and tropical trees,  
Of islands lost in the Spanish Main,  
Which no man ever may find again,  
Of fishes, and corals under the waves,  
And seahorses stabled in great green caves,  
Sea Shell, Sea Shell,  
Sing of the things you know so well.

Amy Lowell (1874-1925)

Another source of floral creations was, perhaps unexpectedly, the sea. The ocean, in all its beauty, offered its harvest in the many forms of the plants and creatures that inhabit it. Of these, the seashell probably best represents the sea's elusive qualities of beauty and graceful form. From the tiniest mussel to the mammoth giant clam, seashells have provided us with a broad array of shapes, colors and textures used in everything from currency to motifs in art and architecture. The seashell also became a focal point in an increasing interest in the natural sciences in the eighteenth century and thereafter, the obsession of those known as conchologists. The rarest, most beautiful or unusual were considered prize possessions.

Treasures from the deep rapidly surpassed wax as the material of choice for creating artificial flowers. One of the most common forms is a bouquet of shell flowers under a glass dome. The example shown on the cover, acquired on Portobello Road in London, is brimming with shell blooms; during its restoration a piece of London

newspaper dated 1868 was discovered as part of the basket's contents. A technique prevalent in these wicker basket arrangements is the application of brightly colored tempera paint to many of the shell petals showing the Victorians' love of color and their propensity to gild the lily.

Just as in wax flower making, an extensive list of materials was required. One was given in the book *Ladies Fancy Work – Hints and Helps to Home Taste and Recreations*.<sup>11</sup>

The implements and materials required for this (shell) work are colors in powder, rubbed up well with gum or white of egg, a few varieties of stamens and pistils, such as used for wax flowers, sharp small scissors, knife with two blades, one serrated, or a small Sorrento saw, camel's hair brushes of several sizes, Damar varnish, alcohol, and the shell-cement. The cement for flowers is made by melting gum-tragacanth and a little alum, six parts to one; when dissolved, mix into a thick paste with plaster-of-Paris, adding a little sugar of (white) lead. Roll this into a ball for future use.



Wax flower making kit, Chester County, Pennsylvania, c. 1850s. Private collection. Photo courtesy of Alan Kolc Photography.

Myriad miniature shell species were suggested to create the desired flower, including pearlized turbos, tiny clam shells, cowries, dove shells, rose petal shells, nerites, etc. These shells were harvested from all around the globe with a majority of them being found in the warm waters of the Caribbean. To create a camellia, for example, the shell artist would first place a ball of cement on the end of a wire and begin to arrange the suggested painted shells, smallest to largest from the center to the outermost, in a concentric fashion. The book goes on to describe the step-by-step procedures for simulating a variety of delightful blooms from the humble forget-me-not to the exotic passion flower – where it was suggested one use the spiny tips of the sea urchin to simulate its crown of thorns. Upon finishing the variety of blooms, the artist would begin to construct the larger arrangement. Any and all elements of the sea could be utilized to decorate the base of the dome, including seaweed, coral, small crabs, tiny starfish and sand. In many of the examples of shell flowers in a wicker basket, the wired blooms and leaves were forced into a tissue-paper covered mound of moss that filled its center.





(L to R): Shell work arch with shell birds and vase in square-based dome. American, c. 1860. Hair wreath created by Amy Ida Williams from her own hair plus that of 53 family members and her pet pony, Pollie. American, c. 1882. Private collection. Photos courtesy Alan Kolt Photography.

Some of the best shell work originated in England, where a cottage industry developed that produced thousands of domed shell flower arrangements done in a rather formulaic manner. One of the finest American examples is the arrangement illustrated here housed under a magnificent square-based dome. The concept is that of a large arch covered in moss and blooms done in shells that have been imbedded in mounds of beeswax, another favorite technique. These flowers are accented with fern-like sprays of rice shells. The columns supporting the arch are not only embellished with spiraling shells and crab-eye seeds but also have three-dimensional birds feathered with minute rose-petal shells and tails composed of tusk shells. Nestled under the arch is a shell-work vase holding a bouquet of smaller shell flowers and another shell bird. The stepped moss-covered dais is trimmed with shells and decorated with shell-work cartouches. One also finds turtles made of shells lurking amidst the moss. This tour-de-force came from an upstate New York estate; it has the appearance of being homemade – and is surely unique.

### Hair-work Flowers

No other parlor art expresses the nineteenth century's love of sentimentality more than hair work. And what could express one's love and devotion or represent a

family tree more than a flower or flowers made from the hair of those who donated their locks. Unlike other human tissue hair does not quickly deteriorate over time but remains as a resilient reminder of those who cherished it long ago.

The bulk of the hair work created during the Victorian age was done in the form of a family tree or otherwise to honor people living at the time it was made. Such a group is honored in the marvelous hair flower wreath shown in this article. In nineteenth-century American hair work, the wreath was the most frequently chosen form. This hair wreath included a treasure hidden behind the wooden backboard, for there, folded in quarters, was the original key or diagram drawn by the hair artist herself, Amy Ida Williams. As indicated by the inscription on the key, the piece required an entire year to make. Amy collected hair from fifty-three family members all of whom are listed in the diagram. When examining the hair flowers one notices two very simple ones in jet black hair. After referring to the key, it can be seen that these were made from the mane of her pet pony Pollie.

The technique used by Amy Williams for this wreath, called gimp work, was the most popular method of making three-dimensional flowers and other hair-work objects to be displayed under shades or in shadow boxes. As shown here, the technique involved making a chain, or

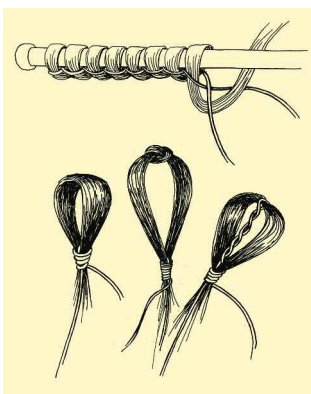


Illustration of "gimp" hair work techniques, c. 1870.

“gimp,” of tiny loops of hair on thin wire. The only requirements were long strands of various colored hair, wire, and a selection of needles or rods in varying thicknesses. The artist looped the hair over the needle as she twisted the wire beneath it. Once the desired length was achieved, it could be joined with others to form the shape of a petal or leaf. The variety of designs achieved, not only in the hair color but in the size of the hair loops, proved to be limitless when creating these flowers. Of all the parlor arts, hair work perhaps best exhibits the virtuosity of the at-home artist.

### The Waning of Parlor Pastimes

On a domestic level in America and abroad the first decades of the twentieth century, culminating with World War I, brought unprecedented changes. The role of women in society was changing drastically and the outcry for independence and the vote was heard throughout the world. No longer did the modern woman accept her former image as a fragile hothouse plant. As women entered the work force and male-dominated professions,

they dispensed with many notions the past had prescribed. The art of creating decorations such as flowers from beeswax, shells and hair met their end at this time as well. The Jazz Age had no time for parlor pastimes, and they became just that – things that had flourished in years gone by, but no longer.



This era has been captured in the book *Under Glass, A Victorian Obsession*, by John Whitenight, published by Schiffer Ltd., the most comprehensive study to date on objects placed under glass domes and in glass cases during the nineteenth century – wax, shells, hair, wool, skeleton leaves, paper, taxidermy and automata.

The book is available through  
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# Preservation Diary

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## *The Battles to Preserve New York City's Historic Rail Stations*

GIBSON CRAIG

This year, 2013, marks half a century since the date that the first wrecking ball tore into the historic fabric of Pennsylvania Station, and also the date when the Pan Am Building (now the Met Life Building) opened as the first phase of a planned Grand Central City that if developed to its full extent would have greatly altered Grand Central Terminal. In the hearts and minds of New York preservationists, these events are among the lowest points in the last century.

### **The War between the Railroads**

Industrialization on a capitalist foundation was seemingly without limits in early twentieth-century America. This was nowhere more obvious than in Manhattan, with its great organized concentrations of millionaire investors, industrialists, and financiers. Business acumen, a large immigrant workforce, and sympathetic government policies joined with the latest technology to produce some of the greatest architectural and engineering feats since Imperial Rome.

The heated rivalry between the New York Central Railroad and the Pennsylvania Railroad began as early as the 1880s. The popular and lucrative New York-to-Chicago route was at the heart of the competition, with both rail companies beefing up their steam engines and increasing the lavishness of the interiors of their cars to attract passengers. There are accounts of rival locomotives departing New York at the same time, racing at top speed, taking entirely different track systems, and finishing within only minutes of one another in a dead sprint along adjacent tracks during their final approach to Chicago.

New York Central would always have an advantage over the Pennsylvania with the prime location of its “head house,” at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street and Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue), truly both “grand” and “central.” This irked the then president of Pennsylvania Railroad, Alexander Cassatt; with nothing but the broad Hudson River in his way he made it his life’s mission to bring the Pennsylvania Railroad’s northern terminus from Jersey City, New Jersey, across the Hudson into midtown Manhattan as the central hub for a Northeastern empire.

### **Pennsylvania Station**

Employing the latest advances in tunneling and electrification, in 1902 Alexander Cassatt commissioned the great designers of the time McKim, Mead & White to design an appropriate building complex in Manhattan. At the same time, the Pennsylvania Railroad assembled an entire crosstown row of real estate stretching from the Hudson to the East River, as well as acquiring the Long Island Rail Road. The team’s goal was to connect the longest tunnel yet to one of the grandest spaces the world had seen. The model for the project could not have fit his dream better – the ancient ruins of the grandiose Baths of Caracalla in Rome (considerably enlarged of course; this *is* New York...).

When the plans were completed, in the owners’ eyes there was one important thing the designers had missed; they had failed to exploit the air rights over the station. But the architectural firm’s chief designer Charles McKim convinced Cassatt and the board of the Pennsylvania to forfeit these for his Beaux-Arts inspired lowrise structure. Lorraine B Diehl, author of *The Late, Great Pennsylvania Station*, writes:

...they wanted to use the valuable air space above the station for building a hotel. McKim was firm. He told the board of directors that Pennsylvania Railroad owed the city of New York a monumental gateway, a building whose sole purpose was the arrival and departure of trains...the materials for the new station would be the finest marble, the best iron, the most beautiful wood, all crafted by design engineers...<sup>1</sup>

With the tunnels the equivalent of the Baths of Caracalla’s aqueducts, Pennsylvania Station set new precedents in travel efficiency. More importantly, Cassatt’s longtime goal of bringing the grandeur of European railroad structures to America had been realized. Stations across the nation followed, and the “gateway station” became the way to set the tone for a traveler about to enter a new city.

But time and the complacency of the railroads took their toll. In the 1950s travel and shipping began to be diverted away from the nation’s deteriorating rail lines and into the hands of the expanding airline and trucking industries. The Pennsylvania Railroad had ridden the





(Above): The main waiting room of Pennsylvania Station, c. 1905. (Below): The main waiting room of Pennsylvania Station, obstructed by a modern advertising canopy, 1962.

wave for too long without reinvesting its capital wisely. Pennsylvania Station's pollution-stained facade, its rusting rail bridges and burnt-out signals began to resemble the ancient ruins of Rome all too much.

Instead of radical action to preserve the station, however, the railroad took radical action to squeeze all they could out of the real estate. In *Pennsylvania Station*, Steven Parissien writes:

In 1958 Lewis Mumford bemoaned...the fact that the main passageway between the General Waiting Room and Seventh Avenue was being progressively "diminished by a series of centrally-spaced advertisements." No one, he concluded, "could, without clairvoyance, imagine how good [the interiors] used to be." Four years later its condition was even worse. Cars were being exhibited on the platforms – surely one of the best ways yet devised by the PRR to dissuade passengers from using the system. The grand halls were, Ken Macrorie lamented, "monstrously decked with signs and advertising, sample automobiles in the lobby, giant baffle board rising over the waltzing counters – all wrecking the continuity of the original space."<sup>2</sup>

Thus the Pennsylvania Railroad was systematically hiding from the public the beauty that existed in the station – and at the same time negotiating with developers Webb and Knapp a secret deal to sell the air rights. The railroad's then president James Symes was quoted boldly

stating in 1955 that "the new station will be the World's finest" and a "Palace of Progress" was to be built atop it.<sup>3</sup>

The Pennsylvania's true intentions were made public to investors in May 1960, a year when it would report a loss of 1.5 million dollars. Ironically, architect Charles





Protesters picketing outside of Pennsylvania Station, 1963. Photo courtesy of the *New York Times*. The demolition of Pennsylvania Station continues, while the new Madison Square Garden is constructed, 1966.

McKim's insistence that there would be no development whatsoever of the site's valuable air rights had contributed to its demise. In July of 1961 the plans for the present Madison Square Garden and One Penn Plaza were unveiled in the *New York Times*.

Many New Yorkers approved of the idea of a new arena and commercial complex, but by no means all. An opposing organization, Action Group for Better Architecture for New York (AGBANY), was founded by six leading architects of the era specifically to save the station. The group's cries for preservation fell on a seemingly deaf mayor and a newly founded but weak Landmarks Preservation Commission, however. Although AGBANY with some 200 architects then took to the streets and rallied to show their support, their actions were derided, surprisingly, by negative architectural press.

*Architectural Forum* posed as the voice of the architectural establishment by accusing "a few hundred militant people" of standing in the way of a badly-needed commercial and sporting complex. "Most New Yorkers," it claimed without substantiation, "think of the station as where the trains are." More ominously it claimed, "You can't fight Big Money."<sup>4</sup>

Pennsylvania Station's fate was shared with countless historical landmarks across the nation, as part of what many saw as a "progressive" era during the 1950s and 1960s. Many of the now-demolished buildings of this era affected local groups and attracted little press. But in the largest and most powerful city in the nation, Pennsylvania Station was a different story. Those who used it or otherwise saw or had studied and admired it were disappointed, or worse, at the way the "Gateway" had crumbled into the form of a cramped maze. Soon architectural critics began to turn critical.

Even before it was finished, Lewis Mumford had already suggested that passengers would 'be mashed into subterranean passageways like ancient Christians, while the wrestler and fight promoter will be elevated to the vast arena'. True to expectations, the 1968 station was cheaply built and meanly proportioned, the necessarily low ceiling giving New York's principal railroad terminus the atmosphere of a depressed small-town shopping mall.

As Vincent Scully memorably wrote of Penn Station in 1975: "One entered the city like a god...one scuttles in now like a rat."<sup>5</sup>

### Grand Central Terminal

The current Grand Central Terminal is the third railway depot to have been built on its site, Fourth Avenue (now Park Avenue) at 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. It was designed by the architectural firms of Reed & Stem & Warren & Wetmore, who entered an agreement to act as associated architects for the project in February 1904. Reed & Stem were responsible for the overall design of the station, Warren and Wetmore added architectural details and its overall Beaux-Arts style. Charles Reed was the chief executive for the collaboration between the two firms and Alfred T. Fellheimer head of the combined design team. This work was accompanied by the electrification of the three railroads then using the station and the burial of the approach in a tunnel. The result of this was the creation of several blocks worth of prime real estate in Manhattan, renamed Park Avenue, which were then sold for millions. Interestingly, the terminal itself was built with support structures for a possible future tower to be built above it. The new Grand Central Terminal opened on February 2, 1913.

In the 1960s, the demolition of Penn Station had an interesting effect on its rival, for the New York Central also decided to investigate the exploitation of the air rights of its showplace depot, Grand Central. Actually, New York Central had been talking to developers Webb and Knapp too, and as early as 1954. The plan was the total destruction and complete redevelopment of the entire Grand Central mega-block to replace it with a 108-story “Hyperboloid.” But this time the public’s positive view of the station was more apparent, and so the Central backed down and a more terminal-friendly project was proposed. This was “Grand Central City,” which produced the Pan Am building, built on the footprint of the demolished Grand Central baggage building.

Though the Concourse was saved, the once dramatic Park Avenue vista framed by the three arched windows of the Terminal and the delicate Grand Central Tower behind was gone. Instead of space and sky, an aggressive 59-story tower shaped like an elongated octagon, encased in metal, concrete, and glass, loomed over the Terminal. The threat to Grand Central’s survival came from proposals for what was to be built around her and on top of her.<sup>6</sup>

But the project did not begin to alleviate New York Central’s woes; the company still maintained similar losses making it obvious that a highrise was not the answer and that it would take more than this to reverse its profit margin.

Then came the unthinkable – the merger of the once bitter rivals into a new corporation. This happened, in the form of the Penn Central Railroad, in 1968 – although negotiations had begun ten years earlier. It was an act of

desperation; both corporations were accruing huge losses and both desperately needed a quick fix for their shareholders.

Just before the Penn Central merger was approved in August 1967 the newly formed New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission declared the façade but not the

Main Concourse of Grand Central a landmark. This was good news for those wanting to preserve the terminal – but a weakness would be found by the newly formed Penn Central. Two proposals for the development of Grand Central’s air rights were brought to the commission, called Breuer I and Breuer II. The first abided by the landmarking of the façade of the structure by building out of its center; the second saved the Main Concourse but destroyed the façade. Both

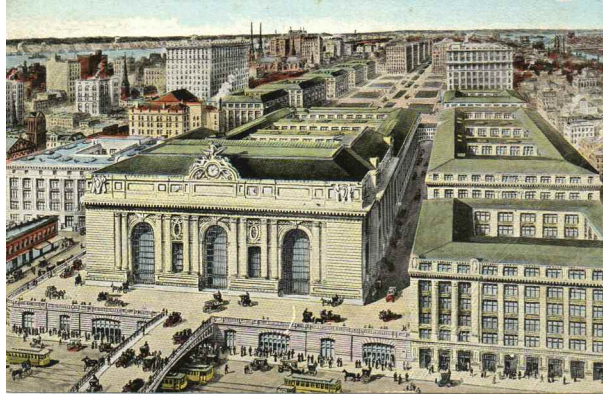
were rejected by the Landmarks Commission, so the Penn Central sought relief from the courts on grounds that their fifth- and fourteenth-amendment rights were violated. Additionally they claimed to be operating at a two-million-dollar deficit and losing revenue from their undeveloped air rights due to the commission’s restriction. So they sought restitution of sixty million dollars from the city as a consequence!

Grand Central’s beauty had been masked for years in ways similar to what had happened at Pennsylvania Station, with advertisements, showroom automobiles, grime, water damage and now the Pan Am building. Could New Yorkers be fooled twice? In January of 1975 Justice Saypol of the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of Penn Central, invalidating the landmark status and allowing Penn Central to do whatever it liked with the site.

John Belle writes:

The threat of the destruction of Grand Central Terminal not only challenged the life of a loved and cherished building but also brought into question our society’s values. Were we a society that would allow motivation for profit to succeed at the expense of history and tradition? If a shared history binds a city of strangers together ...through a single building, do we not have a responsibility to protect that? Is New York City a city without a soul?<sup>7</sup>

By withdrawing the claim for restitution, Penn Central put pressure on the mayor not to exercise the city’s right to appeal. But soon the public caught wind



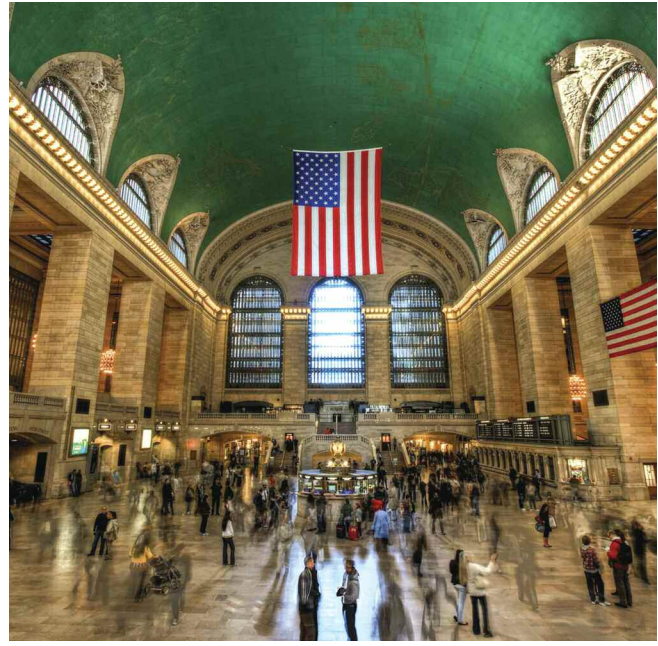
The original Grand Central Terminal complex, c. 1920.



Grand Central Terminal office and baggage building demolition. A proposal for the development of Grand Central’s air rights that was rejected by the Landmarks Commission.







(L to R): Amtrak Concourse at Pennsylvania Station as it looks today. Grand Central Terminal's Main Concourse.

of this, including a number of well known people, many of them in positions of power and influence, such as Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis. Some feel that her letter to the mayor was instrumental in convincing him to go forward with the winning appeal.<sup>8</sup> The ensuing court proceeding, the first of its kind heard in the United States Supreme Court, set precedents in how the designation and defense of our historic landmarks would be handled. The opinion states:

...in recent years, large number of historic structures, landmarks, and areas have been destroyed without adequate consideration of either the values represented therein or the possibility of preserving the destroyed properties for use in economically productive ways...<sup>9</sup>

A victory at last!

### Today

In the intervening years, the two stations have had very different experiences. Fifty years ago, they were both owned by the same entity, Penn Central. After it went into bankruptcy, its assets were split among various entities, in a way too complex to be related here. Suffice it to say that Penn Station ended up being owned by Amtrak, a federally funded agency, while Grand Central became the property of investors who bought many of the real estate assets of Penn Central. In each case, subleases were involved. With Pennsylvania station these were with the Metropolitan Transportation Authority (or MTA, the New York State agency and owner and operator of the Long Island Rail Road, among others); New Jersey Transit; and the Madison Square Garden Company (successor lessees

of the air rights over Penn Station where Madison Square Garden was built). (Amtrak itself runs the intercity trains). As for Grand Central, the only tenant is the MTA, as owner of the MetroNorth Railroad, an amalgamation of the old New York Central and New Haven commuter lines.

The solution undertaken at Grand Central has worked well. In 1993, the MTA acquired de facto control through a lease extending to the year 2274, while the investors retained ownership of the building and its air rights. The twenty years since have proven what was declared in the courts. The agency began taking small steps in reversing the economic hardship encountered by Penn Central, first by removing the banners and advertisements; commuters were astonished at what had been hidden as light began filling the concourse. The roof was patched and eventually the entire exterior and interior were restored, amazing even more. While the restoration was in progress a new advertising campaign began to encourage commuters to use the rails. The bold moves were contrary to what many thought was the only way to make the station work, the Supreme Court had gotten it right, and it is obvious in hindsight that the railroads had it all wrong. Today Grand Central stands as a prominent national icon and the model for large preservation projects to follow by means of economics, politics and the application of precise engineering procedures.

Penn Station is a different story. For one thing, the great potential lure, the grand building demolished a half century ago, no longer exists; there is nothing there to love and cherish. The railroad functions are all underground, with a gigantic stadium squatted atop



The 60 story Pan Am building that replaced Grand Central's office and baggage buildings.

them, like an elephant sitting on an anthill. So the idea was hatched, supported by the late New York senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan and others, to move the Amtrak functions to underused parts of the Farley Post Office Building across Ninth Avenue, also designed by McKim, Mead and White (1912). This idea gained momentum but now has stalled – partly due to the fact that the commuter lines, the busiest part of Penn Station, would be left where they are. Then came the call for an entirely new Penn Station, with a competition entered by several leading architectural firms, the results of which were a great improvement over the present station but showed a lack of practicality and generated only lukewarm public interest. And so it stands, with powerful interests vying with one another, the “Big Money” that “can’t be fought,” to hark back to Architectural Forum’s pronouncement in the 1960s. Stay tuned.

The critical response to the steps taken at the two railway hubs has been consistent. Two comments follow:

#### Christopher Gray in the *New York Times*:

[Grand Central Terminal] has come nearly full circle..., from an abused landmark threatened with demolition, to

a civic jewel... . Anyone who knew the dingy, cluttered Grand Central in the 1970's finds the transformation amazing, just as amazing as the 1913 station must have been to those who knew its precursors.<sup>10</sup>

#### Sarah Goodyear in the *Atlantic*:

There are few transit terminals in the United States as dismal as Penn Station, even after a renovation in the 1990s that made matters slightly less dire. Greyhound stations in some cities compare favorably.<sup>11</sup>

The public response is similar. Here are some characteristic recent comments taken from the Internet:

#### On Pennsylvania Station:<sup>12</sup>

I can only imagine what Penn Station used to look like before it was torn down....Now instead we have a weird long underground hallway....

...the level of Hell that Dante forgot...

#### On Grand Central Terminal:<sup>13</sup>

There's something about this iconic building that draws people from all over the world. It's a functional train terminal, but more than that they've made one of the most remarkable photogenic places in New York....

It's a landmark, a treasure, a gem among a sea of people in the big city. I sometimes stand in the middle ... and just stare up at the ceiling....every time I come through I realize how much Penn Station doesn't compare to this magical New York staple. I love Grand Central!

Preservation works!



#### Notes

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# The Bibliophilist

## *The Civil War and American Art*

Eleanor Jones Harvey. Smithsonian American Art Museum and Yale University Press, 2012.

Citing the “purpose to tease out the war-inflected layer of meaning in some of the most powerful paintings and photographs made during and immediately after the war years” as well as to provide “deeper readings and significant new interpretations,” Smithsonian American Art Museum curator Eleanor Jones Harvey has written *The Civil War and American Art*. The book accompanies a major exhibition of the same title mounted at the Smithsonian American Art Museum between November 16, 2012, and April 28, 2013, and the Metropolitan Museum of Art from May 27, 2013, to September 2, 2013.

This timely publication has been eagerly anticipated by members of the American history and art history communities, especially as we commemorate the sesquicentennial of the Civil War. From its comprehensive title, it could be assumed that it would provide a wide-ranging and up-to-date discussion of the most important art related to the most disastrous war in American history – art that surely would include masterpieces of Grand Manner history painting in a highly significant section. But from the outset, Dr. Harvey makes her view clear: “We must look beyond the Grand Manner of history painting as it was touted in the European art academies.” She chooses to primarily rely on her own interpretations of landscapes, genre paintings, and photography to tell this important story, citing limited sources for her basic philosophy. These include the mid-nineteenth century artist and critic, Eugene Benson, who she concedes was “rare among contemporary [19th century] reviewers,” when in an 1869 edition of *Appleton’s Journal* “he argued that landscape and genre were the means by which current events could be understood in the American fine arts.” And from the more recent literature, Harvey acknowledges the work of Steven Conn, who she identifies as announcing in no uncertain terms that history painting “came up short when faced with the Civil War.”

A true assessment of historical works related to the Civil War lies somewhere in between. Now more than 150 years since the onset of the war – with the luxury of time and patience – art historians have had a clear opportunity to research all related genres. Objective views have been identified. For example Bruce Chambers, in a seminal 1993 essay on the subject, “Painting the Civil War as History, 1861-1910,” clearly understood that during the war, battle paintings were essentially “left to the artist-reporters who worked for the popular illustrated newspapers. With a few notable exceptions, it was not until the 1880s that painters began to show any sustained interest in recording the pivotal military events of the war.”

It is true that the war did have a negative effect on the production of graphically horrific scenes, particularly as so many families, North and South, were sorely affected by its devastation and casualties. Thus it is understandable that artists and patrons were not interested in bloody battle paintings. As a result, the war did play a role in an eventual change in history painting from

an emphasis on Grand Manner battles and theater to a version that contained more positive nostalgia and stressed more domestic events and characters. In the end, there is no question that there were fewer Civil War masterpieces produced and classified within the definition of the Grand Manner when compared with the number that had emerged from the era of the American Revolution, when there was no photography to supplement the archive.

At the same time, contrary to the book’s assertion that history painting had only gained a “tenuous foothold on American shores,” outstanding American history paintings continued to be produced throughout the decades prior to the Civil War. In the 1850s, in particular, a number of artworks depicted nationalistic scenes related to the creation of the United States that could serve as inspiration for its salvation (e.g., masterpieces such as Emanuel Leutze’s *Washington Crossing the Delaware* and Peter Rothermel’s *Patrick Henry at the Virginia House of Burgesses*, both completed in 1851). After the war, in 1866, Rothermel was commissioned to paint the monumental *Battle of Gettysburg -- Pickett’s Charge* (1867-70), then the largest single framed canvas in American art. Neither this artwork nor this artist is mentioned by Harvey, despite the overwhelming and continuing importance of this painting and others by Rothermel to the art of the Civil War. Containing bloody and devastating content, the painting was particularly maligned during its exhibition at the 1876 Philadelphia Centennial, where a critic referred to it as an “unsuitable reminder, at this Centennial time, of discords that are past and troubles which will scarcely be renewed.” Nevertheless, so many decades later, it seems there should be little argument that a reassessment of Civil War art in the twenty-first century must include this masterpiece along with other major post-war history paintings. For a number of Civil War history paintings collectively do survive as a highly significant component of our national visual archive.

Instead, Harvey chooses to focus on landscapes, genre paintings, and other peripheral works and to infuse them with curious interpretations and speculations – to “tease out” ideas that often have little or no documentary basis. Although these works are often inspirational, the meanings ascribed to them are most often unsupported. With regard to Frederic Edwin Church’s *Icebergs* of 1861, despite a mention of “icebergs” a year earlier by a member of Congress in connection with slavery, the relationship of the painting to the Civil War is tenuous. And given the appearance of the finished work, it would seem more appropriate to link it to Harvey’s discussion of Church’s interest in arctic exploration. Moreover, his change of the work’s title to *The North* after the April 1865 attack on Fort Sumter and his subsequent renaming it *The Icebergs* when he attempted to market the painting in England is interesting, but at the same time her scenario argues for little or no connection to Civil War art except as containing only a tangential relationship to the



politics of the day. Harvey does go on to acknowledge this dissociation from the war, but then her conclusion begs the question as to the painting's inclusion in the book in the first place. As for other Church landscapes containing violence in the sky as well as volcanoes, which Harvey refers to as "harbingers of war's societal upheavals" and "associated with the burning issue of slavery in America," these are fascinating metaphors of the horrors of combat if one chooses to interpret them that way, but more evidence is needed as to Church's original intent or, if not available, the author's own ideas need to be labeled as such.

On the other hand, Harvey does deal effectively with the section on photography, as she describes the then relatively new medium's ability to capture both the immediacy and revulsion at viewing freshly slaughtered human bodies. And she does bring in some works that more closely document actual historical events, such as George Caleb Bingham's *Martial Law* (Order No. 11) (1865-68). Her work on Eastman Johnson and Winslow Homer is methodical, despite, once again, a continuing tendency to create meanings and stylistic interpretations as the final words on the subject. In her discussion of Homer's *Near Andersonville*, she appropriately describes the historical record of the prison: thirty-five thousand prisoners, malnutrition, overcrowding, etc. And she does qualify her statement of William Tecumseh Sherman's intent when she states that the work "may" allude "to a failed but daring attempt by one of Sherman's regiments to free Union prisoners from Andersonville and Macon, another notorious prison camp." But other interpretations related to the scene including the use of the "dipper gourds" to encourage freedom, contemplations on the part of the woman in the doorway, and the direction of the floor boards are conjecture. And in Homer's *Visit from an Old Mistress*, where is it evident from the work that the former slaves are standing in "opposition" to their former mistress? Why should we believe that the closed door behind the former

mistress implies "unresolved tension?" And is there reason to conclude that the women are staring at each other in a cold and direct manner? The faces do not look particularly remarkable even though they are said to appear within a context of "adversarial uncertainty." Seeking documentation for Harvey's conclusions, all that can be found in the notes is a question as to whether Homer had seen *Whistler's Arrangement in Grey and Black: The Artist's Mother* (1871) for the possible similarities she observes between the appearance of Homer's "old mistress" and Whistler's mother.

Harvey's creation of interpretations of significant works painted during the Civil War but having no documented relationship to the war's iconography go on and on. An important work by Homer Dodge Martin is an example. In *The Iron Mine, Port Henry, New York* of ca. 1862, a place where iron ore was extracted to be used in the manufacture of Union artillery guns, Harvey definitively describes the abandoned mines as "the rusted tailings staining the slopes from the adits down to the water's surface, resembling streaks of dried blood." She then carries her assertions even further by stating that "the cavernous openings to the mine shafts suggest entry wounds. Here the landscape takes on the sobering quality of a bullet-ridden corpse, yet another casualty of war." Once again, if any of this ascribed meaning can be confirmed as the intent of the artist it requires serious documentation, which is not provided.

*The Civil War and American Art* was undoubtedly a major undertaking and a research project of massive proportions. Overall, however, the problems discussed above render the resulting book a problematic resource.

Reviewed by Barbara J. Mitnick

## Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America

Susan Reynolds Williams. University of Massachusetts Press, 2013.

Anyone who studies early American culture will eventually come across the writings of Alice Morse Earle (1851-1911). Her seventeen books and countless other works – including magazine articles, reviews, pamphlets, and speeches – published between 1891 and 1904, have contributed a crucial backbone to studies in a variety of topics in American history. One need only look at the titles of her books to get a sense of the breadth of Earle's interests: *The Sabbath in New England* (1891); *China Collecting in America* (1892); *Colonial Dames and Good Wives* (1895); *Old-Time Gardens* (1901); *Two Centuries of Costume in America* (1903). Though Earle's works are referenced by scholars in a wide variety of fields, little has been written about her life and influences. With *Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America*, Susan Reynolds Williams has produced the first serious study of this important figure.

In her own time, Earle was hailed for her work in uncovering and preserving the customs and relics of America's past. Her books were constantly in print, and her writing could be found in many of the important cultural publications of the day, including

*The Atlantic Monthly*, *The Independent*, *Ladies' Home Journal*, *Lippincott's Monthly Magazine*, *New England Magazine*, and *The Dial*. Earle's research helped inform the fledgling trade in American antiques and the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historic house and preservation movements, and even proved influential in the field of historical reenactment and interpretation. Her work, which was heavily weighted towards New England, also contributed to the romanticization of that region and its dominant image as the quintessential "Colonial" location in the American imagination.

Because Earle eschewed scholarly methods of citation and because she was a woman who had little in the way of formal scholarly qualifications (she attended a finishing school rather than a college), her work fell out of favor among early twentieth-century academic historians (mostly men) who were determined to "professionalize" the field. Her marginalization is a bitter irony, given Morse's own view of herself as an ethnologist following the new German scientific approaches to historical research and her written attempts to assert her own expert

credentials. Though “professional” historians might have turned up their noses at her anecdotal style, historians working outside of the academy relied upon her work. As cultural history gained recognition as a valid academic field in the latter half of the twentieth century, Earle found greater acceptance. The scholarly community took note of her importance in studies of the Colonial Revival, public history, material culture, women’s literature and history, and late-nineteenth-century Progressivism.

More than a biography, Williams’s book places Earle and her work in their cultural context, drawing a detailed picture of a woman who believed in the civilizing power of “domestic life” and saw the mechanics of that life – cooking, sewing, child-rearing, gardening – as ways in which women could gain agency and become historical actors. Williams examines Earle through the lenses of family, class, ideology, race, and gender in thematic chapters focusing on subjects such as domesticity, parlor culture, the romanticization of New England, genealogy, gardening, and the mania for collecting ceramics. This investigation shows the ways in which nineteenth-century cultural mores and historical events shaped Earle’s life. Her engagement in women’s social and literary clubs encouraged her to turn her interest in history into a profitable career as a writer; financial downturns necessitated that she help support her family. Just as important, Williams examines the ways that Earle exerted influence through her writing, using the details of her own cultural heritage as source material for her history books, which she saw as civilizing

tools that could be used to give an increasingly heterogeneous American population a shared past and a common set of values. Williams weaves together Earle’s life story and her impact on history and culture with a deft and entertaining style. Her achievement is made even more notable given the difficulties she faced in finding information about the notoriously publicity-shy Earle, who seems to have granted only one biographical interview during her lifetime, and whose papers, where they exist at all, were scattered among family members and the archives of her correspondents. As a result, Williams relies heavily on Earle’s published works to gain a sense of her private character, finding tantalizing autobiographical hints among Earle’s historical anecdotes.

In her introductory chapter, Williams notes that “relying on female skills and personal influence rather than direct legal authority, Earle’s women of the past extended their reach far beyond the confines of the domestic realm” (pg 7). *Alice Morse Earle and the Domestic History of Early America* reveals that this reach was not limited to the women Earle wrote about. She used the same strategies, writing and publicizing the history of private life not only to support her family and express herself, but also to irrevocably shape the course of the study of early America.

*Reviewed by Erin E. Eisenbarth*

## *Staging Fashion 1880-1920: Jane Hading, Lily Elsie, Billie Burke*

Michele Majer, Editor. With essays by Lenard R. Berlanstein, Marlis Sweitzer, and Sheila Stowell; and contributions by Bard Graduate Center students Maude Bass-Krueger, William DeGregorio and Rebecca Perry. Catalog published by the Bard Graduate Center, 2012.

Applause! Applause! for this multi-faceted gem of scholarly research, a collaborative effort by independent scholars and Bard Graduate Center faculty and students to accompany the exhibition of the same title curated by Michele Majer and held January 17, 2012 – April 8, 2012 at the Bard Center in New York City. That party’s over but fortunately costume and theater enthusiasts can acquire this catalog with its expansive – and entertaining – studies of the lives and loves of three extraordinary women: French actress Jane Hading (stage name of Jeanne Alfredine Trefouret), (1859-1941); English actress Lily Elsie (née Cotton), (1886-1962); and the American stage and screen actress Billie Burke (Mary William Ethelbert Appleton Burke), (1884-1970).

These women dared to pursue careers in the theater at a time when women in their profession were only gradually ascending from notoriety to, if not respectability, at least to respect for their talents and determination and, not the least, their importance as fashion icons. Readers can chart this progress in the early pages with a welcome *Selected Chronology: Theater, Fashion, and Culture, France, Britain, and the United States*; and in editor Michele Majer’s introduction, *Staging Fashion, 1880-1920*.

Three major essays are featured: *Dangerous and Influential Women: Actresses in Nineteenth-Century French Culture*, by Lenard R. Berlanstein; *Lucile and the Theatricalization of Fashion*, by Sheila Stowell; and *Stylish Effervescence: Billie Burke and the Rise of the Fashionable Broadway Star*, by Marlis Schweitzer. And, under the direction of Ms. Majer, the life of each actress is skillfully spotlighted by a Bard graduate student: Jane Hading by Maude Bass-Krueger; Lily Elsie by Rebecca Perry; and Billie Burke by William DeGregorio. The students also contributed to the *Selected Performances* listing and the exhibition checklist. An extensive bibliography is included. Kudos to the book design team for the subtle pink-and-sepia format, so appropriate to the era of study.

*Reviewed by Sally Buchanan Kinsey*

# 2013 VSA Book Award Winners

At a ceremony on April 27 in St Augustine, Florida, the site of 2013 annual meeting of the Victorian Society in America, the winners of the 2013 book awards were presented. The members of the Book Award Committee congratulate this year's winners:

The 2013 Henry-Russell Hitchcock Award went to ***Inventing the Modern World: Decorative Arts and the World's Fairs, 1851-1939***, by lead authors Jason T. Busch and Catherine L. Futter. The Hitchcock award recognizes a book published in 2012 that makes a significant contribution to the study of architecture, decorative arts or allied fields. The Committee believes that *Inventing the Modern World* demonstrates that the idea of the "modern" was indeed invented by the Victorians, and put on display at the great expositions of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The book makes its points through eleven scholarly essays and illustrations of over 200 well chosen and beautifully photographed objects. This publication is as much of a tour de force as the prize-winning objects it highlights, and indeed the expositions themselves. It accompanies a traveling exhibition of the same name organized jointly by the Carnegie Museum of Art in Pittsburgh, where Mr. Busch acted as curator, and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, where Dr. Futter acted as curator. They assembled a distinguished team of essay writers and researchers, including Regina Lee Blaszczy, Stephen Harrison, Karin A. Jones, Martin P. Levy, Dawn Reid, Ethan Robey, Annamarie V. Sandeck, Jane Shadel Spillman and Kevin W. Tucker.

The 2013 W. E. Fischelis Award went to ***Angels & Tomboys: Girlhood in 19<sup>th</sup> Century American Art*** by lead author Holly Pyne Connor. The Fischelis award recognizes a book published in 2012 that makes a significant contribution to the study of 19<sup>th</sup>-century American art and artists. The Committee applauds the book's contribution to our understanding of the portrayal of girls in America. The book lets us discover angels and tomboys, miniature mothers and carefree sprites, and, moreover, girls who combined all these traits. The essays by Sarah Burns, Barbara Dayer Gallati and Lauren Lessing are each insightful. We appreciate the excellent illustrations of little-known artworks. The book accompanies a traveling exhibition of the same name, organized by the Newark Museum, where Dr. Connor acted as curator.

The 2013 Ruth Emery Award went to ***Sanctified Landscape: Writers, Artists and the Hudson River Valley, 1820-1909***, by David Schuyler. The Emery award recognizes a book published in 2012 that makes a significant contribution to the study of regional history. The Committee admires the book's interdisciplinary investigation of portrayals of the Hudson River Valley. We experience the Valley through the work of seminal figures like painter Thomas Cole, author Washington Irving, and architect A. J. Downing, as well as lesser known but critical people like historian Benson John Lossing and artist Jervis McEntee. We learn that the Hudson River Valley is a place in the American imagination, as much myth as reality. Dr. Schuyler, a landscape historian and American Studies professor at Franklin and Marshall College, published this book with Cornell University Press.

The Book Award Committee voted to award a Citation of Excellence to ***Capricious Fancy: Draping and Curtaining the Historic Interior 1800-1930*** by Gail Caskey Winkler, with an introduction by Roger W. Moss. The Committee is delighted to recognize the significant contribution to design history that this book makes by focusing on the Society's own Samuel J. Dornsife collection. The introduction, by Dr. Moss, tells us about Dornsife's passion for collecting period source material, such as trade catalogs, advertisements, and manuals for upholsterers and designers, which he used in his own work as a preservationist. Dr. Winkler's text fully explicates the wonders of 19<sup>th</sup>-century window treatments and other uses of drapery in the interior. We learn – by reading *and* poring over the sumptuous illustrations – that the Victorian accomplishments in window drapery are a lost art. We realize that this book will become instrumental in reviving interest in the documents that Dornsife collected, and perhaps even the draperies themselves. The book was published by the University of Pennsylvania Press, and was aided by a grant from The Athenaeum of Philadelphia, which houses the Dornsife Collection.

Karen Zukowski, chair, VSA Book Award Committee

## The Victorian Society in America is going green!

And we hope you will assist us in this effort. In an attempt to do our part to reduce the consumption of trees and thus our use of paper we will soon be combining our e-newsletter and our "hard copy" newsletter, *The Victorian*. The result will be ***The Victorian Quarterly***, which will be sent out via e-mail to all of our members who provide us with their e-mail addresses. A print version of the same will be sent via regular U.S. mail only to those who do not have e-mail. This will allow all of our members to receive the same news information from and about the Society.

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is a structural engineer in New York where he specializes in restoration and renovation of historic buildings. He holds a BS degree from Drexel University, as well as a master's degree in Structural Analysis of Historical Constructions at the University of Minho in Portugal and Czech Technical University in Prague.

## ERIN E. EISENBARTH

a PhD candidate at the Bard Graduate Center, is writing a dissertation on memorabilia commemorating George Washington. She is the author of *Baubles, Bangles and Beads: American Jewelry from Yale University, 1700-2005*.

## SALLY BUCHANAN KINSEY

is professor emerita in fashion history and textile design at Syracuse University. Formerly the editor of *Nineteenth Century*, she now serves as contributing editor of the publication.

## BARBARA J. MITNICK

has focused on American history painting in a career as a teacher, curator and author. Her many projects include *Picturing History: American Painting, 1770-1930* (1993-1995), *George Washington: American Symbol* (1999), and *The Union League of Philadelphia: The First 150 Years* (2012).

## JAMES F. O'GORMAN

spends his emeritus years in Maine where he writes articles, catalogs and monographs on nineteenth-century American architects, architecture, architectural books, and architectural drawings. His brief study of architects' portraits will appear at the end of the year.

## STEVEN M. PURDY

is the Lead Interpreter for the whaleship *Charles W. Morgan* at Mystic Seaport. The article in this issue is adapted from a monograph, *A Great American Enterprise: Traditional American Whaling and the Industrial Revolution*, which received the John Gardner Maritime Research Award and is being prepared for publication.

## JOHN WHITENIGHT

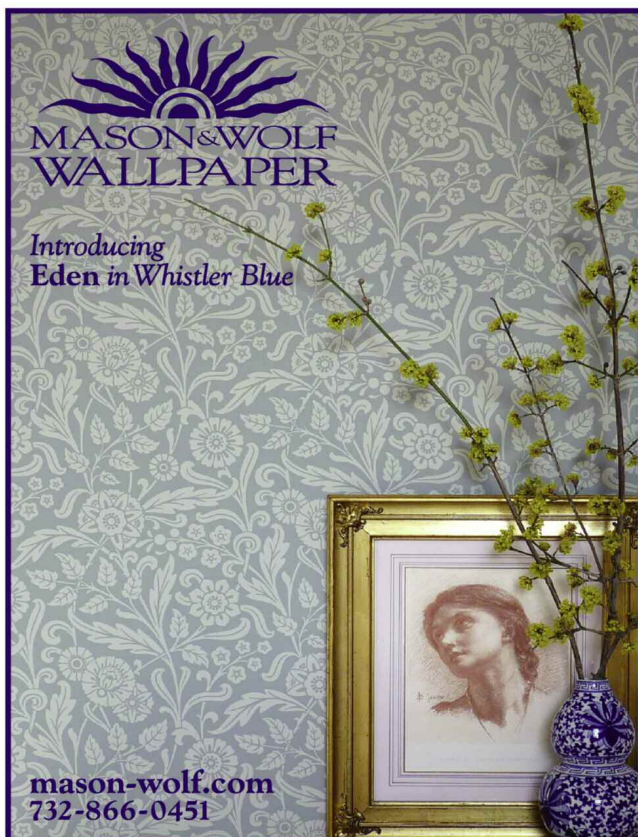
had a long career as a senior high school art teacher and department chair. Always a collector of Victoriana, in the early 1970s he began collecting parlor globes. Currently his collection contains over 175 domed displays ranging in height from four inches to over three feet in height.

## ROBERT WOJTOWICZ

is professor of art history and associate dean for research and graduate studies in the College of Arts and Letters at Old Dominion University. He is the author of many works on architectural history and criticism, with a focus on the multifaceted career of Louis Mumford. He is also a contributor to the *Buildings of Virginia*.

## KAREN ZUKOWSKI

is an independent historian specializing in the visual culture of late 19<sup>th</sup>-century America. She is the author of *Creating the Artful Home: The Aesthetic Movement* and serves on the boards of the VSA, The Olana Partnership and the Historic Artists Homes and Studios program of the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



An advertisement for Port Cunningham Lodge &amp; Resort. The top section has a dark red background with a gold oval logo that says 'PORT CUNNINGTON LODGE &amp; RESORT' and 'EST. 1890'. To the right of the logo, the phone number '1-800-894-1105' and the tagline 'Quality time begins here.' are displayed. Below this is a photograph of a lake with a dock and a building in the background. At the bottom, there is a green background with white text providing the address 'R.R. 1, Dwight, Ontario P0A 1H0', phone and fax numbers '(705) 635-2505' and '(705) 635-1524', and the website 'www.pc-lodge.com'.

# Victorian Travel Tales

## *Sip and Savour the Victorian Way*

SALLY BUCHANAN KINSEY

A cluster of members from the Victorian Society in America, tired and thirsty after a day of viewing wild wallpapers and vexatious vitrines, wander into a welcoming tavern – in your neighborhood. So, you invite them to challenge the wit and wisdom of your favorite mixologist.

“Very well,” says one, “I’d like one of those cocktails that honored Jennie Jerome Churchill when she came to visit her family in New York City in the 1890s.” Replies the bartender, “One classic Manhattan coming right up.”

Another, longing for home, mutters, “I’ve got the blues for St. Louis. Can you mix me one of those specials that originated in 1858 at the Planter’s Hotel?” The reply: “Certainly. Tom Collins is a popular drink.”

From a figure slumped on a bar stool comes a plea: “I’m from Manitoba, and I miss Anika, my Husky. So I’d like a Canadian Dog’s Nose.” The barkeep, taken aback, exclaims, “Wow! You really know how to drink up there. That Bloody-Mary-plus-beer combo will go a long way to brighten your evening.”

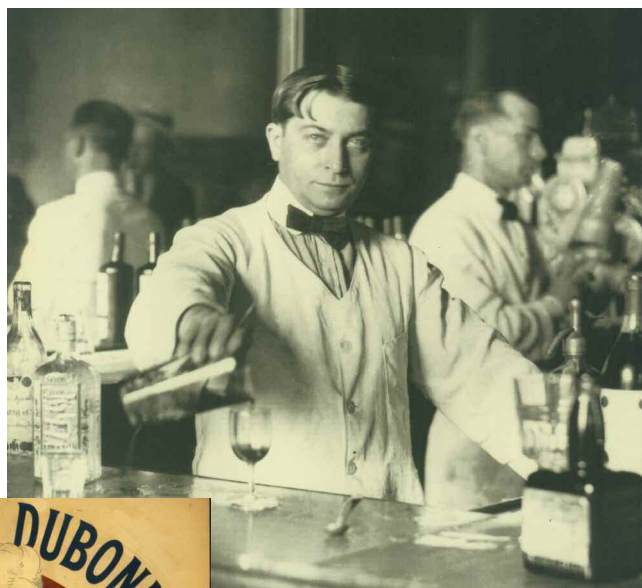
Then, a traveler from Philadelphia chimes in, “I’m feeling patriotic. How about a Betsey Ross?” The mixologist: “Fine choice! The red wine, white brandy and Curacao will make you happy to be an American. Bottoms up!”

Another remarks, “I’m from Scotland, and I’d like Queen Victoria’s favorite afternoon tittle when she’s at Balmoral.” The bartender: “Strong black tea ‘corrected’ with a generous splash of Scotch, the Queen’s fave, and not just in the afternoons... and not just in Scotland. If you had nine errant offspring to look after, as well as an Empire to run, you’d need....”

“Never mind,” grumbles the last guest, “No booze for me. I’m dizzy from that last wallpaper episode, and that etagere – first time I’ve ever seen a paperweight with a glass eye staring up at me. I’m wilted and hungry. I’d like a Vicar’s Coffee.” Bartender: “The strong black brew, a large scoop of vanilla ice cream and a dusting of cinnamon will restore your spirits. Add a dollop of whipped cream?”

They drink. “Everybody satisfied?” asks the barkeep. “Yes,” comes the answer, “Now we know why it’s called Happy Hour.” Says the bartender, “Thanks for the generous tips. By the way, my name’s Victoria ... but you can call me Vicky. Care for another round?”

Nineteenth-century America claims parental rights to the cocktail, but this is a bit of a stretch since the Old World was stirring up libations well before that, “for medicinal purposes” as well as social. Remember, it is to the “limeys” (sailors), when



(L to R): Poster advertising Quinquina Dubonnet Apéritif, Paris, 1895. Bartender, c. 1900. Corbis/Getty Images



Britannia began to rule the waves, that we owe the ever-popular gin and tonic: gin, quinine water and lime juice. Sailors drank it to ward off scurvy and the effects of malaria. It didn’t always work, but they had fun trying. And we thank you. Cheers! But it may be that the first usage of the word *cocktail* – for a concocted drink – emerged in early nineteenth-century New Orleans as a variation of the French noun *coquetier*, a small measuring cup, or from *coquetel*, a wine-based drink. We thank the French. *A votre santé!*



There are hundreds of recipes for mixed drinks in *The New American Bartender’s Guide* by John J. Poister (New York: Penguin, 2002). Many of the colorful complex pasted-hued drinks – like the Pink Lady, Blue Moon, and Sweet Patootie – were thought up in the 1920s to disguise the suspicious “bathtub gin” of the Prohibition era, but most classic two-mix cocktails (bourbon and branch, the martini, etc.) do indeed date from the nineteenth century.

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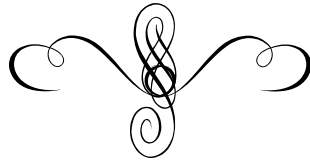




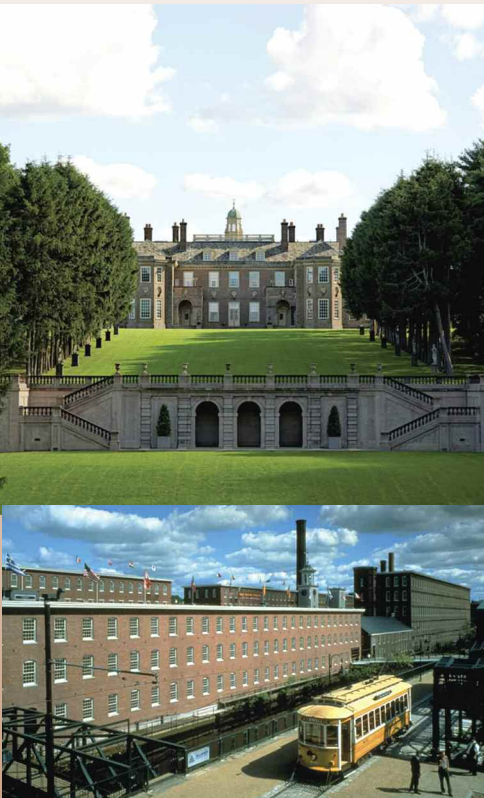
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and available by request and on the VSA website, [www.victoriansociety.org](http://www.victoriansociety.org).

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